Johannes Tillotson S.S. Theologiæ
Professor, Regiæ Majestati a Sacris
Decanus Cantuariensis.

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SERMONS
PREACH'D
Upon several Occasions.

By JOHN TILLOTSON, D.D.
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and
Miss Gloria Bates Rogers
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(v.1-2)

To the Worshipfull the Masters of the Bench, and the rest of the Members of the Honourable Society of Lincolns-Inn.

Gentlemen,

WHen I resolv'd to publish these Sermons, there could be no dispute to whom I should dedicate them. They do of right belong to you, being most of them first preach'd among you; besides my great obligation to you for your constant respects to me, both in the favourable acceptance and in the generous en-

couragement of my labours, ever ſince I had the honour and happineſs to be related to you. In a thankfull acknowledgment whereof I humbly preſent this ſmall part of them to you, hoping that by the bleſſing of God they may be of ſome uſe for the promoting of true piety and vertue, which is the ſincere wiſh and aim of

Your moſt obliged

and faithfull Servant,

John Tillotſon.

The Preface.

I *Shall neither trouble the* Reader, *nor my ſelf, with any apology for the publiſhing of theſe* Sermons. *For if they be in any meaſure truly ſerviceable to the end for which they are deſign'd, to eſtabliſh men in the Principles of Religion and to recommend to them the practice of it with any conſiderable advantage, I do not ſee what Apology is neceſſary, and if they be not ſo, I am ſure none can be ſufficient. However, if there need any, the common heads of excuſe in theſe caſes are very well known; and I hope I have an equal right to them with other men.*

I ſhall chuſe rather in this Preface, *to give a ſhort account of the following* Diſcourſes; *and as briefly as I can to vindicate a ſingle* paſſage *in the* firſt *of them from the Exceptions of a* Gentleman *who hath been pleas'd to honour it ſo far as to write a whole Book againſt it.*

The Deſign of theſe Diſcourſes *is fourfold.*

First, *To shew the unreasonableness of* Atheism, *and of* scoffing at Religion; *which I am sorry is so necessary to be done in this Age. This I have endeavour'd in the* two first *of these* Discourses..

Secondly, *To recommend Religion to men from the great and manifold* advantages *which it brings both to* publick Society *and to* particular persons. *And this is the argument of the* third *and* fourth.

Thirdly, *To represent the* excellency, *more particularly, of the* Christian Religion; *and* to vindicate the practice of it *from the suspicion of those* grievous troubles and difficulties *which many imagine it to be attended withall. And this is the subject of the* fifth *and* sixth.

Fourthly, *To perswade men to the practice of this holy Religion, from the* great obligation which the profession of Christianity *lays upon men to that purpose; and more particularly, from the glorious rewards of another life; which is the design of the* two last Discourses.

Having given this short account of the following Discourses, *I crave leave of the* Reader *to detain him a little longer, whilst I vindicate a* passage *in the first of these* Sermons, *from the assaults of a whole* Book *purposely writ against it. The* Title *of the*

Book

Book *is* Faith vindicated from the poſſibility of Falſhood. *The Authour Mr.* J. S. *the famous* Authour *of* Sure-footing. *He hath indeed in this laſt Book of his, to my great amazement, quitted that glorious* Title. *Not that I dare aſſume to my ſelf to have put him out of conceit with it, by having convinc'd him of the phantaſticalneſs of it. No, I deſpair to convince that man of any thing, who after ſo fair an admonition does ſtill perſiſt to maintain,* * *that* firſt and ſelf-evident Principles *not onely may, but are fit to be demonſtrated; and* † *that thoſe ridiculous identical Propoſitions, that* Faith is Faith, *and* a Rule is a Rule, *are* firſt Principles *in this Controverſie of* the Rule of Faith, *without which nothing* can be ſolidly concluded either about Rule or Faith. *But there was another reaſon for his quitting of that* Title, *and a prudent one indeed: He had forſaken the defence of* Sure-footing, *and then it became convenient to lay aſide that* Title, *for fear of putting people any more in mind of that Book.*

* *Letter of Thanks,* p. 24, &c.
† Ibid. p. 11.

I expected indeed after his Letter of Thanks, *in which he* * *tells us, he* intended to throw aſide the rubbiſh of my Book, that in his Anſwer he might the better lay open the Fabrick of my Diſcourſe, and have no-

* P. 14.

thing there to doe, but to ſpeak to ſolid Points; *I ſay, after this, I expected a full Anſwer to* the ſolid Points (*as he is pleaſed to call them*) *of my Book; and that,* (*according to his excellent method of* removing the rubbiſh, *in order to the pulling down of a building*) *the* Fabrick *of my Book would long ſince have been demoliſh'd and laid even with the ground. But eſpecially, when in the concluſion of that moſt civil and obliging Letter, he threaten'd* never to leave following on his blow, till he had either brought Dr. *Still.* and me to lay Principles that would bear the teſt, or it was made evident to all the world that we had none; *I began* (*as I had reaſon*) *to be in a terrible fear of him, and to look upon my ſelf as a dead man. And indeed who can think himſelf ſo conſiderable as not to dread this mighty man of* Demonſtration, *this Prince of* Controvertiſts, *this great Lord and Poſſeſſour of* Firſt Principles? *But I perceive that great minds are mercifull, and do ſometimes content themſelves to threaten when they could deſtroy.*

For inſtead of returning a full Anſwer to my Book, he (*according to their* new mode *of confuting Books*) *manfully falls a nibbling at one ſingle* paſſage *in it,* pag. 118. *wherein he makes me to ſay* (*for I ſay no ſuch thing*)

thing) *that* the Rule of Christian Faith, and consequently Faith it self, is possible to be false: *Nay in his* Letter of Thanks, * *he says* it is an avow'd Position, *in that place*, that Faith is possible to be false. *And to give the more countenance to this calumny, he chargeth the same* Position (in equivalent terms) of the possible falshood of Faith, and that as to the chiefest and most fundamental Point, the Tenet of a Deity, *upon the fore-mentioned* Sermon. *But because he knew in his conscience, that I had* avow'd *no such* Position, *he durst not cite the words either of my* Book *or* Sermon *lest the Reader should have discover'd the notorious falshood and groundlesness of this Calumny: Nay he durst not so much as refer to any particular place in my Sermon, where such a* passage *might be found. And yet this is the Man that has the face to charge others with false citations; to which charge, before I have done, I shall say something, which (what effect soever it may have upon him) would make any other man sufficiently asham'd.*

* P. 13.

But yet I must acknowledge, that in this Position *which he fastens upon me, he honours me with excellent company, my Lord* Faulkland, *Mr.* Chillingworth, *and Dr.* Stillingfleet; *Persons of that admirable*

strength

ſtrength and clearneſs in their Writings, *that Mr. S. when he reflects upon his own ſtyle and way of reaſoning, may bluſh to acknowledge that ever he has read them. And as to this* Poſition *which he charges them withall, I do not know (nor have the leaſt reaſon upon Mr. S's word to believe) any ſuch thing is maintained by them.*

As for my ſelf, whom I am now onely concern'd to vindicate, I ſhall ſet down the two Paſſages *to which I ſuppoſe he refers.*

In my Sermon, *I endeavour (among other things) to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of Atheiſm upon this account:* Becauſe it requires more evidence for things than they are capable of. *To make this good, I diſcourſe thus: Ariſtotle* hath long ſince obſerved, how unreaſonable it is to expect the ſame kind of Proof for every thing which we have for ſome things. Mathematical things being of an abſtracted nature, are onely capable of clear Demonſtration. But Concluſions in Natural Philoſophy, are to be prov'd by a ſufficient Induction of experiments; things of a Moral nature, by Moral Arguments, and Matters of Fact by credible Teſtimony. And though none of theſe be ſtrict Demonſtration, yet have we an undoubted aſſu-

assurance of them, when they are prov'd by the best Arguments that the nature and quality of the thing will bear. None can demonstrate to me, that there is such an Island in *America* as *Jamaica*; yet upon the Testimony of credible persons, and Authours who have written of it, I am as free from all doubt concerning it, as from doubting of the cleerest Mathematical Demonstration. So that this is to be entertained as a firm Principle, by all those who pretend to be certain of any thing at all, that when any thing is prov'd by as good Arguments as that thing is capable of, and we have as great assurance that it is, as we could possibly have supposing it were, we ought not in reason to make any doubt of the existence of that thing. Now to apply this to the present case. The being of God is not Mathematically demonstrable, nor can it be expected it should; because onely Mathematical matters admit of this kind of evidence. Nor can it be prov'd immediately by sense, because God being suppos'd to be a pure Spirit, cannot be the object of any corporeal sense. But yet we have as great assurance that there is a God, as the nature of the thing to be prov'd is capable of, and as we could in reason

expect

expect to have, ſuppoſing that he wer

Upon this paſſage it muſt be (if any thi
in the Sermon) *that Mr.* S. *chargeth th*
Poſition (in equivalent terms) of t
poſſible falſhood of Faith, and that as
the chiefeſt and moſt fundamental Poin
the Tenet of a Deity. *And now I appe
to the Reader's Eyes and Judgment, whethe
the ſum of what I have ſaid, be not thi
That though the exiſtence of God be not cap
ble of that ſtrict kind of Demonſtrati
which Mathematical matters are, yet, th
we have an undoubted aſſurance of it. O
would think that no man could be ſo ridiculou
as from hence to infer, that I believe it po
ſible, notwithſtanding this aſſurance; th
there ſhould be no God. For however
many other caſes an undoubted aſſurance tha
a thing is, may not exclude all ſuſpicio
of a poſſibility of its being otherwiſe; ye
in this* Tenet of a Deity *it moſt certain
ly does. Becauſe whoever is aſſur'd tha
there is a God, is aſſur'd there is a Bein
whoſe exiſtence is and always was neceſſary
and conſequently is aſſured that it is impoſſi
ble he ſhould not be, and involves in it a con
tradiction. So that my Diſcourſe is ſo fa
from being* equivalent *to the* Poſition *h
mentions, that it is a perfect contradictio
to it. And he might with as much truth*

hav

have affirm'd, that I had expreſly, and in ſo many words ſaid that there is no God.

The other paſſage is in pag. 118. *of my* Book, *concerning* the Rule of Faith. *I was diſcourſing that no man can* ſhew by any neceſſary argument, that it is naturally impoſſible that all the Relations concerning *America* ſhould be falſe. *But* yet (*ſay I*) I ſuppoſe, that notwithſtanding this, no man in his wits is now poſſeſt with ſo incredible a folly, as to doubt whether there be ſuch a place. The caſe is the very ſame as to the certainty of an ancient Book, and of the ſenſe of plain expreſſions: We have no demonſtration for theſe things, and we expect none; becauſe we know the things are not capable of it. We are not infallibly certain, that any Book is ſo ancient as it pretends to be; or that it was written by him whoſe Name it bears; or that this is the ſenſe of ſuch and ſuch paſſages in it; it is poſſible all this may be otherwiſe: But we are very well aſſur'd that it is not, nor hath any prudent man any juſt cauſe to make the leaſt doubt of it; For a bare poſſibility that a thing may be, or not be, is no juſt cauſe of doubting whether a thing be or not. It is poſſible all the people in *France* may dye this night, but I hope the poſſibility of this doth not incline

incline any man in the least to think it wi
be ſo. It is poſſible that the Sun may no
riſe to morrow morning; yet for all this
ſuppoſe that no man hath the leaſt doub
but that it will.

To avoid the cavils of this impertinen
Man, I have tranſcrib'd the whole Page
which he refers. And now where is this
vow'd Poſition of the poſſible falſhood
Faith? *All that I ſay is this, That we a*
not infallible *either in judging of the an*
quity of a Book, or of the ſenſe of it;
which I mean (as any man of ſenſe and in
genuity would eaſily perceive I do) that w
cannot demonſtrate theſe things ſo, as
ſhew that the contrary neceſſarily involves
contradiction; but yet that we may have
firm aſſurance concerning theſe matters, ſo
not to make the leaſt doubt of them.

And is this to avow the poſſible falſhoo
of Faith? *And yet this* Poſition *Mr.* S
charges upon theſe words; how juſtly I ſha
now examine.

Either by Faith *Mr.* S. *means the* Doc
trine *reveal'd by God, and then the meanin*
of the Poſition *muſt be*, that what Go
ſays, is poſſible to be falſe; *which is*
abſurd a Poſition *as can hardly enter in*
any man's mind; and yet Mr. S. *hath th*
modeſty all along in his Book *to inſinua*
tha

that in the forecited Paſſage *I ſay as much as this comes to.*

Or elſe Mr. S. *means by* Faith, *the* aſſent *which we give to Doctrines as reveal'd by God; and then his ſenſe of infallibility muſt be, either that whoever aſſents to any thing as reveal'd by God cannot be deceiv'd, upon ſuppoſition that it is ſo reveal'd; or elſe abſolutely, that whoever aſſents to any thing as reveal'd by God, cannot be deceiv'd. Now although I do not, in the* Paſſage *forecited, ſpeak one ſyllable concerning Doctrines reveal'd by God, yet I affirm (and ſo will any man elſe) that an aſſent to any Doctrine as revealed by God, if it be reveal'd by him, is impoſſible to be falſe. But this is onely an infallibility* upon ſuppoſition, *which amounts to no more than this,* That if a thing be true, it is impoſſible to be falſe. *And yet the principal deſign of Mr.* S's Book *is to prove this, which I believe no man in the world was ever ſo ſenſeleſs as to deny. But if he mean* abſolutely, *that whoever aſſents to any Doctrine as reveal'd by God, cannot be deceiv'd, that is, that no man can be miſtaken about matters of Faith (as he muſt mean, if he pretend to have any adverſary, and do not fight onely with his own ſhadow,) this I confeſs is a very comfortable aſſertion, but I am much afraid it is not true.*

Or

Or else lastly, By Faith *he understands the* Means *and* Motives *of Faith. And then the plain state of the controversie between us is this,* Whether it be necessary to a Christian belief to be infallibly secur'd of the means whereby the Christian Doctrine is convey'd to us, and of the firmness of the Motives upon which our belief of it is grounded. *This indeed is something to the purpose; for though in the* passage *before-cited, I say not one word concerning the Motives of our Belief of the Christian Doctrine, yet my discourse there was intended to be apply'd to the* means *whereby the knowledge of this Doctrine is convey'd to us. However, I am contented to joyn issue with Mr.* S. *upon both these Points.*

1. *That it is not necessary to the true nature of* Faith, *that the* Motives *upon which any man believes the Christian Doctrine should be absolutely conclusive, and impossible to be false. That it is necessary, Mr.* S. *several times affirms in his* Book; *but how unreasonably, appears from certain and daily experience. Very many Christians (such as St.* Austin *speaks of,* as sav'd not by the quickness of their understandings, but the simplicity of their belief) *do believe the Christian Doctrine upon incompetent grounds, and their belief is true, though the argument upon*

upon which they ground it be not (*as Mr. S. ſays*) abſolutely concluſive of the thing: *And he that thus believes the Chriſtian Doctrine, if he adhere to it, and live accordingly, ſhall undoubtedly be ſav'd; and yet I hope Mr. S. will not ſay that any man ſhall be ſaved without true Faith. I might add, that in this* Aſſertion *Mr. S. is plainly contradicted by thoſe of his own Church.*

For they generally grant, that *General Councils*, though they be infallible in their *Definitions* and *Concluſions*, yet are not always ſo in their *Arguments* and reaſonings about them. And the *Guide* of Controverſies ** expreſly ſays*, that it is not neceſſary that a Divine Faith ſhould always have an external rationally infallible ground or motive thereto (whether Church Authority, or any other) on his part, that ſo believes. *Here is a man of their own Church* avowing *this* Poſition, that Faith is poſſible to be falſe. *I deſire Mr. S. who is the very* Rule *of Controverſie, to doe juſtice upon this falſe* Guide. * P. 35.

I muſt acknowledge that Mr. S. attempts to prove this Aſſertion, *and that by a very pleaſant and ſurprizing Argument, which is this.* The profound Myſteries of Faith (*he tells us* †) muſt needs ſeem to ſome, (*viz.* thoſe who have no light but their † *Faith. vind.* p. 90.

‖ P. 89. pure natural Reaſon, ‖ *as he ſaid before*) impoſſible to be true; which therefore nothing but a Motive of its own nature ſeemingly impoſſible to be falſe can conquer ſo as to make them conceit them really true. *What Mr. S. here means by a Motive* of its own nature ſeeming *impoſſible to be falſe I cannot divine, unleſs he means a* real ſeeming *impoſſibility. But be that as it will; does Mr. S. in good earneſt believe that a* Motive of its own nature ſeeming impoſſible to be falſe, *is ſufficient to convince any man, that has and uſes* the light of natural Reaſon, *of the truth of a thing* which muſt needs ſeem to him impoſſible to be true? *In my opinion theſe two ſeeming impoſſibilities are ſo equally matched that it muſt needs be a drawn Battel between them. Suppoſe the thing to be believed be* Tranſubſtantiation; *this indeed is a very* profound *Myſtery, and is* (*to ſpeak in Mr. S's phraſe*) of its own nature ſo ſeemingly impoſſible, *that I know no* argument *in the world ſtrong enough to cope with it. And I challenge Mr. S. to inſtance in any* Motive of Faith *which is, both to our underſtanding and our ſenſes, more plainly impoſſible to be falſe than their Doctrine of* Tranſubſtantiation *is evidently impoſſible to be true. And if he cannot, how can he reaſonably*

ſonably expect that any man in the World ſhould believe it?

2. That it is not neceſſary to the true nature of Faith, that we ſhould be infallibly ſecur'd of the means whereby the Chriſtian Doctrine is convey'd to us; particularly of the Antiquity and Authority of the Books of Scripture, and that the expreſſions in it cannot poſſibly bear any other ſenſe. And theſe are the very things I inſtance in, in the paſſage ſo often mention'd. And to theſe Mr. S. ought to have ſpoken, if he intended to have confuted that paſſage. But he was reſolv'd not to ſpeak diſtinctly, knowing his beſt play to be in the dark, and that all his ſafety lay in the confuſion and obſcurity of his talk.

Now that to have an infallible ſecurity in theſe particulars is not neceſſary to the true nature of Faith is evident upon theſe two accounts; becauſe Faith may be without this infallible ſecurity, and becauſe in the particulars mention'd it is impoſſible to be had.

1. Becauſe Faith may be without this infallible ſecurity. He that is ſo aſſur'd of the Antiquity and Authority of the Books of Scripture, and of the ſenſe of thoſe Texts wherein the Doctrines of Chriſtianity are plainly delivered, as to ſee no juſt cauſe to doubt thereof, may really aſſent to thoſe Doc-

trines though he have no infallible ſecurity. And an aſſent ſo grounded I affirm to have the true nature of Faith. For what degree of aſſent, *and what ſecurity of the* Means, *which convey to us the knowledge of Chriſtianity are neceſſary to the true nature of Faith is to be eſtimated from the end of Faith, which is the ſalvation of mens ſouls. And whoever is ſo aſſur'd of the* authority *and* ſenſe *of Scripture, as to believe the Doctrine of it, and to live accordingly, ſhall be ſaved. And ſurely ſuch a belief as will ſave a man hath the true nature of Faith, though it be not infallible. And if God have ſufficiently provided for the ſalvation of men of all capacities, it is no ſuch reflexion upon* the goodneſs and wiſedom of providence, *as Mr. S. imagines, that he hath not taken care that every man's Faith ſhould arrive to the degree of infallibility; nor does our bleſſed Saviour, for not having made this proviſion, deſerve* to be eſteem'd by all the world not a wiſe Lawgiver, but a mere Ignoramus and Impoſtor, *as * one of his* fellow Controvertiſts *ſpeaks with reverence.*

* *Labyrinthus Cantuarienſis P.77.*

Beſides, this aſſertion that infallibility is neceſſary to the true nature of that aſſent which we call Faith, *is plainly falſe upon another account alſo; becauſe Faith admits of degrees. But Infallibility has none. The*

Scripture

Scripture ſpeaks of a weak and a ſtrong Faith, and of the increaſe of Faith; but I never heard of a weak and ſtrong Infallibility. Infallibility is the higheſt perfection of the knowing faculty, and conſequently the firmeſt degree of aſſent upon the firmeſt grounds, and which are known to be ſo. But will Mr. S. ſay, that the higheſt degree of aſſent admits of degrees, and is capable of increaſe? Infallibility is an abſolute impoſſibility of being deceived; now I deſire Mr. S. to ſhew me the degrees of abſolute impoſſibility; and if he could doe that, and conſequently there might be degrees of Infallibility, yet I cannot believe that Mr. S. would think fit to call any degree of Infallibility a weak Faith *or aſſent.*

2. *Becauſe an infallible ſecurity in the particulars mention'd is impoſſible to be had; I mean in an ordinary way, and without miracle and particular revelation; becauſe the nature of the thing is incapable of it. The utmoſt ſecurity we have of the antiquity of any Book is humane Teſtimony, and all humane Teſtimony is fallible for this plain reaſon becauſe all men are fallible. And though Mr. S. in defence of his beloved Tradition is pleas'd to ſay that humane Teſtimony in ſome caſes is infallible, yet I think no man before him was ever ſo hardy as to maintain that the Teſti-*

mony of fallible men is infallible. I grant it to be in many caſes certain; that is, ſuch as a conſiderate man may prudently rely and proceed upon, and hath no juſt cauſe to doubt of; and ſuch as none but an obſtinate man or a fool can deny. And that thus the learned men of his own Church define certainty *Mr.* S. (*if he would but vouchſafe to reade ſuch Books*) *might have learnt from* * Melchior Canus, *who ſpeaking of the firmneſs of humane Teſtimony in ſome caſes* (*which yet he did not believe to be infallible*) *defines it thus*, thoſe things are certain among men, which cannot be deny'd without obſtinacy and folly. *I know Mr.* S. *is pleas'd to ſay, that* certainty *and* infallibility *are all one. And he is the firſt man that I know of that ever ſaid it. And yet perhaps ſome body may have been before him in it, for I remember* Tully *ſays*, that there is nothing ſo fooliſh but ſome Philoſopher or other has ſaid it. *I am ſure Mr.* S's *own* Philoſopher *Mr.* Wh. *contradicts him in this moſt clearly, in his* Preface *to* Ruſhworth's Dialogues; *where explicating the term* Moral certainty *he tells us, that* ſome underſtood by it ſuch a certainty as makes the cauſe always work the ſame effect, though it take not away the abſolute poſſibility of working other ways; *and this preſently after he tells us*, ought abſolutely to be reckon'd

* De lo. Theol. lib. II. c. 4. Certa apud homines ea ſunt, quæ negari ſine pervicacia, & ſtultitia non poſſunt.

reckon'd in the degree of true certainty, and the Authours conſider'd as miſtaken in undervaluing it. *So that, according to Mr.* Wh. *true certainty may conſiſt with a poſſibility of the contrary, and conſequently Mr. S. is miſtaken in thinking certainty and infallibility to be all one. Nay, I do not find any two of them agreeing among themſelves, about the notions of infallibility and certainty. Mr.* Wh. *ſays, that what ſome call* moral certainty, *is true certainty, though it do not take away a poſſibility of the contrary. Mr. S. aſſerts the direct contrary, that Moral certainty is only probability, becauſe it does not take away the poſſibility of the contrary. The* Guide in Controverſies * *differs from them both, and makes* moral, certain *and* infallible *all one. I deſire that they would agree theſe matters among themſelves before they quarrel with us about them.* * P. 135.

In brief then, though moral certainty *be ſometimes taken for a high degree of probability which can onely produce a doubtfull aſſent; yet it is alſo frequently us'd for a firm and undoubted aſſent to a thing upon ſuch grounds as are fit fully to ſatisfie a prudent man; and in this ſenſe I have always us'd this* Term. *But now* infallibility *is an abſolute ſecurity of the underſtanding from all poſſibility of miſtake in what it believes. And there are but two ways for the under-*

ſtanding to be thus ſecur'd; either by the perfection of its own nature, or by ſupernatural aſſiſtance. But no humane underſtanding being abſolutely ſecur'd from poſſibility of miſtake by the perfection of its own nature (which I think all mankind except Mr. S. have hitherto granted) it follows, than no man can be infallible in any thing, but by ſupernatural aſſiſtance. Nor did ever the Church of Rome *pretend to infallibility upon any other account, as every one knows that hath been converſant in the Writings of their Learned men. And*

* P.88,89. *Mr.* Creſſy *in his * Anſwer to Dr.* Pierce *hath not the face to contend for any other infallibility but this, that* the immutable God can actually preſerve a mutable creature from actual mutation: *But I can by no means agree with him in what immediately follows, concerning the* Omniſcience *of a creature; that God,* who is abſolutely omniſcient, can teach a rational Creature all truths neceſſary or expedient to be known; ſo that though a man may have much ignorance, yet he may be in a ſort omniſcient within a determinate ſphere. Omniſcient within a determinate ſphere, *is an infinite within a finite ſphere; and is not that a very pretty ſort of knowing all things*

which

which may conſiſt with an ignorance of many things? Of all the Controvertiſts *I have met with (except Mr.* S.) *Mr.* Creſſy *is the happieſt at theſe ſmart and ingenious kind of reaſonings.*

As to the other Particular *of the ſenſe of Books, it is likewiſe plainly impoſſible, that any thing ſhould be deliver'd in ſuch clear and certain words as are abſolutely incapable of any other ſenſe; and yet notwithſtanding this, the meaning of them may be ſo plain as that any unprejudic'd and reaſonable man may certainly underſtand them. How many* Definitions *and* Axioms, *&c. are there in* Euclid, *in the ſenſe of which men are univerſally agreed, and think themſelves undoubtedly certain of it? and yet the words in which they are expreſs'd, may poſſibly bear another ſenſe. The ſame may be ſaid concerning the Doctrines and Precepts of the H. Scriptures; and one great reaſon why men do not ſo generally agree in the ſenſe of theſe as of the other is becauſe the intereſts, and luſts, and paſſions of men are more concern'd in the one than the other. But whatever uncertainty there may be in the ſenſe of any Texts of Scripture, Oral Tradition is ſo far from affording us any help in this caſe that it is a thouſand times more uncertain and leſs to be truſted to; eſpecially if we*

may

may take that to be the Traditionary ſenſe of Texts of Scripture, which we meet with in the Decretals *of their* Popes, *and the* Acts *of ſome of their* Councils; *than which never was any thing in the whole world more abſurd and ridiculous: And whence may we expect to have the infallible Traditional ſenſe of Scripture, if not from the* Heads *and* Repreſentatives *of their Church?*

This may abundantly ſuffice for the vindication of that Paſſage *which Mr.* S. *makes ſuch a rude clamour about, as if I had therein deny'd the truth and certainty of all Religion; but durſt never truſt the Reader with a view of thoſe* words *of mine upon which he pretended to ground this Calumny. But the world underſtands well enough, that all this was but a ſhift of Mr.* S's *for the ſatisfaction of his own Party, and a pitifull Art to avoid the vindication of* Sure-footing, *a Task he had no mind to undertake.*

And yet the main deſign of this Book *which he calls* Faith vindicated, &c. *is to prove that which I do not believe any man living ever denyed,* viz. *That what is true is not poſſible to be falſe: Which, though it be one of the plaineſt Truths in the world, yet he proves it ſo fooliſhly, as would make any man (if it were not evident of it ſelf) to doubt of it. He proves it from*

Logick,

Logick, *and* Nature, *and* Metaphyſicks, *and* Ethicks, *&c. I wonder he did not do it likewiſe from* Arithmetick *and* Geometry, the Principles *whereof*, he * *tells us*, are concerned in demonſtrating the certainty of Oral Tradition. *He might alſo have proceeded to* Aſtrology, *and* Palmiſtry, *and* Chymiſtry, *and have ſhewn how each of theſe lend their aſſiſtance to the evidencing of this Truth. For* that *could not have been more ridiculous, than his* † *Argument from the nature of* Subject, *and* Prædicate, *and* Copula in Faith Propoſitions; *becauſe forſooth whoever affirms any Propoſition of Faith to be true, affirms it impoſſible to be falſe. Very true. But would any man argue, that what is true is impoſſible to be falſe, from the* nature *of* Subject, Prædicate *and* Copula? *for be the Propoſition true or falſe, theſe are of the ſame* nature *in both, that is, they are* Subject, Prædicate *and* Copula.

* *Sure-footing*, p. 93.

† *Faith vindic.* p. 6. 7, &c.

But that the Reader *may have a taſte of his clear ſtyle and way of reaſoning, I ſhall for* his *ſatisfaction tranſcribe Mr. S's whole Argument from the* nature *of the* Prædicate. *His words are theſe.* Our Argument from the *Copula* is particularly ſtrengthned from the nature of the *Prædicate* in the Propoſitions we ſpeak of; I mean in ſuch ſpeeches as affirm ſuch and ſuch points of

Faith

P. 9, 10, 11, 12. Faith to be true. For *True* means *Existent* in Propositions which express onely the *An est* of a thing, as most points of Faith doe; which speak abstractedly, and tell not wherein the nature of the subject it speaks of consists, or the *Quid est*. So that most of the Propositions Christians are bound to profess are fully expresst thus, *A Trinity is existent*, &c. and the like may be said of those Points which belong to a Thing or Action past; as, *Creation was*, &c. For, *Existent* is the Prædicate in these two, onely affixt to another difference of time; and 'tis equally impossible such Subjects should *neither have been* nor *not have been*, or *have been* and *have not been* at once, as it is that a thing should neither *be* nor *not be* at present, or both *be* and *not be* at present. Regarding then stedfastly the nature of our Prædicate [*Existent*] we shall find that it expresses the utmost Actuality of a Thing; and as taken in the posture it bears in those Propositions, that Actually *exercis'd*, that is, the utmost Actuality in its most actual state; that is, as absolutely excluding all manner or least degree of Potentiality, and consequently all possibility of being otherwise; which is radically destroyed when all Potentiality is taken away.

This

This Diſcourſe holding, which in right to truth I ſhall not fear to affirm (unconcern'd in the drollery of any Oppoſer) to be more than Mathematically *demonſtrative*, it follows inevitably that whoſo is bound to profeſs a *Trinity*, *Incarnation*, &c. *is or was exiſtent*, is alſo bound to profeſs that 'tis *impoſſible they ſhould be not Exiſtent*; or which is all one, that 'tis impoſſible theſe points of Faith ſhould be falſe.

The ſame appears out of the nature of *diſtinction* or *diviſion* applyed to our Prædicate *Exiſtent*, as found in theſe Propoſitions: For could that Prædicate bear a pertinent diſtinction expreſſing this and the other reſpect, or *thus* and *thus*, it might poſſibly *be* according to one of theſe reſpects, or thus *conſidered*, and *not be* according to another, that is *another way conſidered:* But this evaſion is here impoſſible; for either thoſe diſtinguiſhing Notions muſt be more Potential or Antecedent to the Notion of *Exiſtent*, and then they neither reach *Exiſtent*, nor ſupervene to it as its Determinations or Actuations, which differences ought to doe; nor can any Notion be more *Actual* or *Determinative* in the line of *Subſtance* or Being, than *Exiſtent* is; and, ſo fit to diſtinguiſh it in that line; nor, laſtly, can any determi-

termination in the line of Accidents ſerve the turn; for, thoſe ſuppoſe Exiſtence already put, and ſo the whole Truth of the Propoſition entire and complete antecedently to them: 'Tis impoſſible therefore that what is thus affirmed to be *True*, ſhould in any regard be affirmed *poſſible to be falſe*: the impoſſibility of diſtinguiſhing the Prædicate pertinently, excluding here all poſſibility of divers reſpects.

The ſame is demonſtrated from the impoſſibility of diſtinguiſhing the Subjects of thoſe Faith-propoſitions; for thoſe Subjects being Propoſitions themſelves; and accepted for *Truths*, as is ſuppoſed, they are incapable of Diſtinction, as ſhall be particularly ſhewn hereafter. Beſides, thoſe Subjects being points of Faith, and ſo ſtanding in the Abſtract, that is, not deſcending to ſubſuming reſpects, even in that regard too they are freed from all pertinent diſtinguiſhableneſs.

The ſame is demonſtrated from the nature of *Truth*, which conſiſts in an Indiviſible; whence there is nothing of *Truth* had, how great ſoever the conceived approaches towards it may be, till all *may-not-bees*, or Potentiality to be otherwiſe, be utterly excluded by the Actuality of

Is

Is or Exiſtence; which put or diſcover'd, the light of *Truth* breaks forth, and the dim twilights of *may-not-bees* vaniſh and diſappear.

I have here (Reader) *preſented thee with a Diſcourſe which* (*if we may believe Mr.* S.) is more than Mathematically demonſtrative. *A rare Sight indeed! And is not this a pleaſant Man, and of good aſſurance? I now find it true, which he* * *ſays elſewhere*, that Principles are of an inflexible *genius*, and ſelf-confident too, and that they love naturally to expreſs themſelves with an aſſuredneſs. *But certainly the ſacred* names *of* Principles *and* Demonſtration *were never ſo profan'd by any Man before. Might not any one write a Book of ſuch* Jargon, *and call it Demonſtration? And would it not equally ſerve to prove or confute? If he intended this* ſtuff *for the ſatisfaction of the People, he might as well have writ in the* Coptick *or* Sclavonian *Language: yet I cannot deny, but that it is very ſuitable to the Principles of the* Roman Church; *for why ſhould not their* Science *as well as their* Service *be in an unknown Tongue? that the one may be as fit to improve their knowledge, as the other is to raiſe their devotion. But if he deſigned this for the Learned, nothing could be more impro-*

* *Letter of Thanks*, p. 1.

improper; for they are far leſs apt to admire non-ſenſe *than the common People: And I deſire that no man (how learned ſoever he may think himſelf) would be over-confident, that this is ſenſe. I do verily believe, that neither* Harphius, *nor* Ruſbrochius, *nor the profound* Mother Juliana, *have any thing in their writings more ſenſeleſs and obſcure than this Diſcourſe of his, which he* affirms to be more than Mathematically Demonſtrative. *So that if I were worthy to adviſe Mr. S. he ſhould give over this pretence to* Science; *for whatever he may think, his Talent certainly does not lie that way; but he ſeems to be as well made for a* Myſtical Divine, *as any man I know; and methinks his* Superiours *ſhould be ſenſible of this, and employ him to write about the* Deiform fund of the Soul, *the* ſuper-eſſential life, *the* method of ſelf-annihilation, *and the* paſſive unions of nothing with nothing: *Theſe are profound* Subjects, *and he hath a* Style *peculiarly fitted for them. For even in this* parcel of ſtuff *which I have now cited, there are five or ſix* words, *ſuch as* may-not-bees, potentiality, actuality, actuation, determinative, ſupervene and ſubſume, *which if they were but well mingled and diſcreetly ordered, and brought in now and then with a* that is, *to explain*

one

one another) would half ſet up a man in that way, and enable him to write as Myſtical a Diſcourſe as a man would wiſh. But enough of this. And I have treſpaſs'd not a a little upon mine own diſpoſition in ſaying thus much, though out of a juſt indignation at confident Non-ſenſe.

It is time now to draw toward a concluſion of this debate. I ſhall onely leave with the Reader *a few obſervations concerning this* Book *of Mr. S's and his Doctrine of Infallibility.*

Firſt, *That the main drift of his* Book *being to prove, that what is true is impoſſible to be falſe, he oppoſes no body that I know of in this matter.*

Secondly, *That in aſſerting Infallibility to be neceſſary to the true nature of Faith he hath the generality of his own Church his profeſſed Adverſaries. The Church of* Rome *never arrogated to her ſelf any other Infallibility but what ſhe pretends to be founded upon* Chriſt's *promiſe to ſecure his Church always from Errour by a* ſupernatural aſſiſtance, *which is widely different from Mr. S's rational infallibility of* Oral Tradition. *Mr. S. ſurely cannot be ignorant, that the* Divines *of their Church (till Mr.* Ruſhworth *and Mr.* White *found out this new way) did generally reſolve*

Faith into the infallible Teſtimony of the Church, and the infallibility of their Church, into our Saviour's Promiſe; and the evidence of the true Church into the Marks of the Church, *or* the Motives of credibility; *which* Motives *are acknowledg'd to be onely* prudential, *and not* demonſtrative. * Bellarmine *ſays, that the* Marks *of the Church do not make it* evidently true, *which is the true Church, but onely* evidently credible; and that (*ſays he*) is ſaid to be evidently credible which is neither ſeen in it ſelf, nor in its principles; but yet hath ſo many and ſo weighty Teſtimonies, that every wiſe man hath reaſon to believe it. *Becanus* * *to the ſame purpoſe*, that the Motives of credibility are onely the foundation of a prudent, but not of an infallible aſſent. *I know very well that Mr.* Knott *and ſome others would fain perſwade us, that an aſſent* in ſome ſort *infallible may be built upon* prudential Motives, *which is as abſurd as it's poſſible; but if it were true, yet Mr. S. would not accept of this* ſort of *infallibility; nothing leſs will ſerve him than* demonſtrative Motives, *and ſuch as are* abſolutely concluſive of the thing. Stapleton (*as Mr.* Creſſy *tells us*) *expreſly ſays, that ſuch* an infallible certitude of Means *is not now neceſſary to the* Paſtors

* L. 4. de Eccleſ.

* Sum. Tom. 2. partic. de fide c. 1.

of the Church, as was neceſſary to the Apoſtles, *who were the firſt founders of the Church. So that, according to theſe* Authors, *there may be true Faith where neither the means nor the Motives of it are ſuch as to raiſe our aſſent to the degree of infallibility. And this is as much to the full as any* Proteſtant (*that I know of*) *ever ſaid. Nay, even his* Friends *of the* Tradition, *Mr.* Ruſhworth, *Mr.* White *and Mr.* Creſſy, *are guilty of the ſame* damnable and fundamental Errour, *as Mr. S. calls it* †. *For they grant leſs aſſurance than that which is infallible to be ſufficient to Chriſtian Faith, and that we are juſtly condemn'd if we refuſe to believe upon ſuch evidence as does ordinarily ſatisfie prudent men in humane affairs. And particularly, Mr.* Wh. *makes a queſtion whether humane nature be capable of infallibility; as I have ſhewn at large by clear and full Teſtimonies out of each of theſe* Authors, *in the* Anſwer *to* Sure-footing †. *Of which* Teſtimonies *though Mr. S. hath not thought fit to take the leaſt notice throughout his* Book; *yet I cannot but think it a reaſonable requeſt, to deſire him to vindicate the* Divines *of his own Church (eſpecially thoſe of his own way) from theſe things, before he charge us any farther with them.*

† *Letter to his Anſwerer, p.* 5.

† P. 120, &c.

Thirdly, *That Mr. S. by this* Principle, *that infallibility is neceſſary to the true nature of Faith, makes every true believer infallible in matters of Faith; which is ſuch a* Paradox, *as I doubt whether ever it enter'd into any other man's mind. But if it be true, what need then of any infallibility in* Pope *or* Council? *And if this infallibility be grounded upon the nature of Oral Tradition, what need of ſupernatural aſſiſtance? I doubt Mr. S. would be loth to preach this Doctrine at* Rome; *I have often heard, that there is an old teaſty* Gentleman *lives there, who would take it very ill that any one beſides himſelf ſhould pretend to be infallible.*

Fourthly, *That Mr. S. by* his *Principles does plainly exclude from ſalvation the generality of his own Church, that is, all that do not believe upon* his *Grounds. And this is the neceſſary conſequence of his reaſoning in a late* Treatiſe, *intituled*, The method to arrive at ſatisfaction in Religion: *The principles whereof are theſe; That* the Church is a Congregation of Faithfull; *The* Faithfull *are thoſe* who have true Faith; *That*, till it be known which is the true Faith, it cannot be known which is the true Church;

That

That which is the true Faith, can onely be known by the true Rule of Faith, *which is* Oral Tradition; *And that the infallibility of* this Rule *is* evident to common ſenſe. *And from theſe principles he concludes* *, *that* thoſe who follow not this Rule, and ſo are out of this Church, can have no true Faith; *And that* though many of the Points to which they aſſent are true, yet their aſſent is not Faith; for Faith (ſpeaking of Chriſtian Faith) is an aſſent which cannot poſſibly be falſe. *So that the Foundation of this Method is the ſelf-evident infallibility of Oral Tradition, which hath been ſufficiently conſider'd in the* Anſwer to Sure-footing, *which yet remains unanſwer'd. That which I am now concern'd to take notice of, is the conſequence of this* Method, *which does at one blow excommunicate and un-Chriſtian the far greateſt part of his own Church. For if all who do not* follow Oral Tradition *as their onely Rule of Faith are out of the Church, and can have no true Faith, then all who follow the* Council of Trent *are* ipſo facto *no Chriſtians. For nothing is plainer, than that* that Council *did not make Oral Tradition the ſole Rule of their Faith, nor rely upon it as ſuch; which hath been prov'd at large in the* Anſwer *to* Sure-footing.

* Sec. 21.

But why is Mr. S. ſo zealous in this matter of infallibility? There is a plain reaſon for it. He finds that confidence, how weakly ſoever it be grounded, hath ſome effect upon the common and ignorant People; who are apt to think there is ſomething more than ordinary in a ſwaggering man, that talks of nothing but Principles *and* Demonſtration. *And ſo we ſee it in ſome other Profeſſions. There are a ſort of People very well known, who find that the moſt effectual way to cheat the People is always to pretend to* infallible *Cures.*

I have now done with his Infallibility. But I muſt not forget this Letter of Thanks. *I ſhall wholly paſs by the paſſion and ill language of it, which a man may plainly ſee to have proceeded from a gall'd and uneaſie mind. He would fain put on ſome pleaſantneſs, but was not able to conceal his vexation. Nor ſhall I inſiſt upon his palpable ſhuffling about the explication of the Terms,* Rule *and* Faith. *He was convinc'd that he had explain'd them very untowardly, and*
P. 7. *therefore would gladly come off by ſaying that he did not intend* explication, *but onely to* prædicate *or* affirm *ſomething of them. And yet the whole deſign of the firſt page of* Sure-footing *is to ſhew the neceſſity of beginning with the* meaning of thoſe words

words which expreſs the thing under debate: *And this* method *he tells us he will* apply to his preſent purpoſe, *and will* examine well *what is* meant *by thoſe* words *which expreſs the thing he was to diſcuſs, namely, The* RULE *of* FAITH. *Now if to* examine well what is meant by words, *be not to go about to* explain *them, I muſt confeſs my ſelf to be in a great errour. Of the ſame kind is his Apology for his* Teſtimonies, *as if they were* * not intended againſt the Proteſtants; *whereas his* Book *was writ againſt the* Proteſtants, *and when he comes to his* Teſtimonies, *he* † *declares the deſign of them to be, to* ſecond by Authority *what he had before eſtabliſh'd by* Reaſon. *So that if the* Rational part *of his* Book *was intended againſt the Proteſtants, and the* Teſtimonies *were deſign'd to ſecond it, I cannot underſtand why he ſhould ſay* one *was leſs intended againſt them than the* other. *But it ſeems he is ſo conſcious of the weakneſs of thoſe Teſtimonies, that he does not think them fit to ſatisfie any but thoſe who believe him already.*

* P. 105.

† *Sure-footing.* P. 126.

As to his charge of falſe citations, *it is but the common artifice of the Roman Controvertiſts when they have nothing elſe to ſay. However that the world may ſee how little he is to be truſted, I ſhall inſtance in two or*

three about which he makes the loudeſt clamour, and leave it to the Reader *to judge by theſe of his ſincerity in the reſt.*

P. 62. *He ſays, I notoriouſly abuſe the* Preface *to* Ruſhworth's Dialogues *in citing the* Authour *of it to ſay that* ſuch certainty as makes the cauſe always to work the ſame effect though it take not away the abſolute poſſibility of working otherwiſe, ought abſolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty; *whereas* (*ſays Mr.* S.) *he onely tells us there*, p. 7. that by moral certainty [ſome underſtood] ſuch a certainty as makes the cauſe, &c. *To vindicate my ſelf in this, I ſhall onely ſet the* Author's *words before the* Reader's *eyes. They are theſe.* This term *Moral certainty*, every one explicated not alike; but ſome underſtood by it ſuch a certainty as makes the cauſe always work the ſame effect, though it take not away the abſolute poſſibility of working otherways. Others call'd that a *moral certainty* which proceeds from, &c. A third explication of this word is, &c. Of theſe three the firſt ought abſolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty, and the Authors conſider'd as miſtaken in undervaluing it. *Is this onely to tell us that by moral certainty* ſome underſtood, &c. *Does not the* Prefacer *alſo expreſs*

preſly affirm, that what theſe ſome underſtood by moral certainty, ought abſolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty? *which is the very thing I cited him for.*

Another heavy charge is, that according to my uſual ſincerity, *I quote* Ruſhworth's *Nephew to ſay, that a few good words are to be caſt in concerning Scripture,* [for the ſatisfaction of indifferent men who have been brought up in this verbal and apparent reſpect of the Scripture,] whereas (*ſays Mr. S.*) in the place you cite, he onely expreſſes, it would be a ſatisfaction to indifferent men to ſee the poſitions one would induce them to embrace maintainable by Scripture. *Does he onely ſay ſo? let the Reader judge. The words in Mr.* Ruſhworth *are theſe:* Yet this I muſt tell ye, that it were a great ſatisfaction for indifferent men, that have been brought up in this verbal and apparent reſpect of the Scripture, to ſee that the Poſitions you would induce them unto, can be and are maintain'd by Scripture, and that they are grounded therein. *Certainly one would think that either this man has no eyes or no forehead.* P. 65.

But the greateſt out-cry of all, is, that I abuſe his firſt Demonſtration *by virtue of a direct* P. 76, 77.

direct falsification both of his words and sense, by cogging in the word [all,] *making his principle run thus, that* the greatest hopes and fear are applied to the minds of [all] Christians. *This indeed I make to be his* Principle *grounded upon his words which I had cited a little before ; and they are these*, First; That Christian Doctrine was at first unanimously settled by the Apostles in the hearts of the faithfull dispers'd in great multitudes over several parts of the world. 2*ly*, That this Doctrine was firmly believed by [all] those faithfull to be the way to Heaven, and the contradicting or deserting of it to be the way to damnation; so that the greatest hopes and fears imaginable were, by engaging the divine Authority, strongly apply'd to the minds of the first Believers, &c. *Now if these* first believers, *to whom he says*, these hopes and fears were strongly apply'd, *be* all those faithfull *he spoke of before which were* dispers'd over several parts of the world, (*as the tenor of his words plainly shews*) *what are these less than all the Christians of that Age ? and he himself a little after tells us, there is the same reason of the following Ages. So that I made his* Principle run no otherwise *than he himself had laid it. And if it contradict*

dict what he ſays elſewhere, it is no new or ſtrange thing. I wonder more at his confidence in charging ſuch falſifications *upon me as every man's eyes will preſently confute him in. Methinks though a man had all* Science, *and all* Principles, *yet it might not be amiſs to have ſome* Conſcience.

I ſhall onely ſpeak a few words to the two ſolid Points, (*as I may call them*) *of his* Letter, *and I have done.*

I had charg'd him that he makes Traditions certainty a firſt *and* ſelf-evident Principle, *and yet that he goes about to demonſtrate it; which I ſaid was impoſſible to be done, and if it could be done was needleſs. To avoid this inconvenience which he found himſelf ſorely preſs'd withall, he diſtinguiſhes between* Speculative *and* Practical *ſelf-evidence, and ſays that things which are* practically *ſelf-evident may be demonſtrated, but thoſe that are* ſpeculatively *ſo, cannot. But he muſt not think to ſhelter himſelf from ſo palpable an abſurdity by this impertinent diſtinction. For let things be* evident *how they will,* ſpeculatively *or* practically, *'tis plain that if they be Principles* evident of themſelves *they need nothing to evidence them; and if they be* firſt *Principles there can be nothing to make them more evident, becauſe there is nothing before them to demonſtrate*

monſtrate them by. Now if Mr. S. had in truth believed that the certainty of Tradition was a firſt *and* ſelf-evident Principle, *he ſhould by all means have let it alone, for it was in a very good condition to ſhift for it ſelf; but his blind way of Demonſtration is enough to caſt a miſt about the cleareſt Truth in the world. But perhaps by the* ſelf-evident *certainty of Tradition, Mr. S. onely means that it is evident to* himſelf, *for I dare ſay it is ſo to no body elſe. And if that be his meaning he did well enough to endeavour to demonſtrate it; it was no more than needed.*

The other Point is about his Firſt Principles, *ſuch as theſe,* a Rule is a Rule, Faith is Faith, *&c. which he ſays* † muſt principle all that can be ſolidly concluded either about *Rule* or *Faith. Of theſe he hath mighty ſtore, and bleſſeth himſelf in it, as the* Rich man *in the* Goſpel *did in his full Barns,* Soul, take thine eaſe, thou haſt *Principles* laid up for many years; *and out of an exceſs of good nature pities my caſe, who did* undertake to write a Diſcourſe about the Ground of Faith, without ſo much as one Principle to bleſs my ſelf with. *But the miſchief is, that after all this ſtir about them they are good for nothing, and of the very ſame ſtamp with that frivolous one*

† P. 11.

P. 74.

Ariſto-

Ariſtotle *ſpeaks of* [if a thing be, it is,] *which he rejects as a vain and ridiculous Propoſition. Such are Mr. S's firſt Principles*, ſurfeited of too much truth (*as an ingenious* Writer *of his own Church ſays of them*) *and ready to burſt with ſelf-evidence, and yet by ten thouſand of them a man ſhall not be able to advance one ſtep in knowledge, becauſe they produce no concluſion but themſelves; whereas it is of the nature of Principles to yield a Concluſion different from themſelves. And to convince Mr. S. fully of the foolery of theſe Principles, I will try what can be done with them, either in a* Categorical *or* Hypothetical *Syllogiſm, e. g.* A Rule is a Rule, Tradition is a Rule, *Ergo* Tradition is a Rule. *Again*, If a Rule be a Rule, then a Rule is a Rule; But a Rule is a Rule, *Ergo. How is any man the wiſer for all this? But it may be Mr. S. can make better work with them, and manage them more dextrouſly, ſo as to* principle *any thing that can* be ſolidly concluded *in any Controverſie.* *Analyt. Poſter.* l. 1.

And now I hope at laſt to have given Mr. S. full ſatisfaction; ſince he has brought me to the very point he deſir'd, to acknowledge that I have no Principles. *And indeed if there be no other to be had but ſuch as theſe, I do declare to all the world, that I neither have any* Principles, *nor will have any.*

The

The Texts of each Sermon.

JOB 28. 28. *And unto man he ſaid; Behold! the fear of the Lord that is wiſedom; and to depart from evil is underſtanding.* page 1

2 Pet. 3. 3. *Knowing this firſt, that there ſhall come in the laſt days Scoffers walking after their own luſts.* p. 101

Prov. 14. 34. *Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation; but ſin is the reproach of any people.* p. 129

Pſalm 19. 11. *And in keeping of them there is great reward.* p. 151

Phil. 3. 8. *Yea doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord.* p. 179

1 Joh. 5. 3. *And his Commandments are not grievous.* p. 213

2 Tim. 2. 19. *Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt depart from iniquity.* p. 243

Phil. 3. 20. *For our converſation is in Heaven.* p. 273

JOB

JOB XXVIII. 28.

And unto man he ſaid; Behold! the fear of the Lord that is wiſedom; and to depart from evil is underſtanding.

IN this Chapter *Job* diſcourſeth of the ſecrets of nature, and the unſearchable perfections of the works of *God*. And the reſult of his diſcourſe is this, That a perfect knowledge of Nature is no where to be found but in the Author of it; no leſs wiſdom and underſtanding than that which made the world and contrived this vaſt and regular frame of Nature can throughly underſtand the Philoſophy of it and comprehend ſo vaſt a deſign: But yet there is a *knowledge* which is very proper to man and lies level to humane underſtanding; and that is the *knowledge* of our Creator and of the duty we owe to him; the *wiſedom* of pleaſing God, by doing what he commands and avoiding what he forbids: This *Knowledge* and *Wiſedom* may be attained by man, and is ſufficient to make him happy. *And unto man he ſaid; Behold!*

Behold! the fear of the Lord that is Wiſdom; and to depart from evil is underſtanding.

Theſe words conſiſt of two Propoſitions, which are not diſtinct in ſenſe, but one and the ſame thing variouſly expreſs'd; For *wiſedom* and *underſtanding* are *ſynonymous* words here; and though ſometimes they have different notions, yet in the *Poetical Books of Scripture* they are moſt frequently uſed as words equivalent, and do both of them indifferently ſignifie either a *ſpeculative knowledge* of things, or a *practical skill* about them, according to the exigency of the matter or thing ſpoken of. And ſo likewiſe *the fear of the Lord*, and *departure from evil*, are *phraſes* of a very near ſenſe, and like importance; and therefore we find them ſeveral times put together in Scripture: *Fear the Lord*, and *depart from evil*: *By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.* So that they differ onely as *cauſe* and *effect*, which by a *Metonymie* uſual in all ſorts of Authors, are frequently put one for another.

Prov. 3.7. Pro. 16. 6.

Now, *to fear the Lord*, and to *depart from evil*, are phraſes which the Scripture uſeth in a very great latitude, to expreſs to us *the ſum of Religion, and the whole of our duty.* And becauſe the large uſage of theſe phraſes is to be the foundation of my following

lowing diſcourſe, I ſhall for the farther clearing of this matter endeavour to ſhew theſe two things:

1. That 'tis very uſual in the Language of Scripture to expreſs the *whole of Religion* by theſe and ſuch like phraſes.

2. The particular fitneſs of theſe two phraſes to deſcribe Religion.

I. It is very uſual in the Language of Scripture to expreſs the *whole of Religion* by ſome eminent principle or part of Religion.

The great Principles of Religion are *knowledge, faith, remembrance, love and fear*; by all which the Scripture uſeth to expreſs the *whole duty of* man.

In the *Old Teſtament*, by the *knowledge*, *remembrance* and *fear* of God. Religion is called *The knowledge of the holy*. And wicked men are deſcribed to be ſuch as *know not God*. So likewiſe, by the *fear of the Lord*, frequently in this Book of *Job*, and in the *Pſalms* and *Proverbs*. And *Then they that feared the Lord ſpake often one to another*. And the *fear of God* is expreſly ſaid to be the ſum of Religion, *Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole of man*: And on the contrary, the wicked are deſcribed to be ſuch as *have not the fear of God before their eyes*. And ſo

Prov. 30. 3. Jer. 10. 25.

Eccl. 12. 13.

Pſal. 36. 1.

ſo likewiſe by the remembrance of *God*, Re-
Eccl. 12. 1. *member thy Creator in the days of thy youth*;
that is, enter upon a religious courſe be-
times: And on the contrary, the character
of the wicked is, that *they forget God*;
Pſal. 9. 17. *The wicked ſhall be turned into Hell*; and
all the Nations that forget God. In the
New Teſtament, *Religion* is uſually expreſſed
by *faith* in *God* and *Chriſt*, and the
love of them. Hence it is, that true
Chriſtians are ſo frequently called *believers*,
and wicked and ungodly men *unbelievers*.
And that good men are deſcribed to be
Rom. 8. 28. ſuch as *love God*, *all things ſhall work toge-*
Eph. 6. 24. *ther for good to them that love God*; and
ſuch as love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Now
the reaſon why theſe are put for the *whole*
of Religion, is, becauſe the *belief*, and
knowledge, and *remembrance*, and *love*, and
fear of God, are ſuch powerfull principles
and have ſo great an influence upon men
to make them Religious, that where any
one of theſe really is, all the reſt, together
with the true and genuine effects of them
are ſuppoſed to be.

And ſo likewiſe the ſum of all Religion
is often expreſſed by ſome *eminent part* of
it; which will explain the ſecond phraſe
here in the Text, *departing from evil*.
The *worſhip of God* is an *eminent part* of

Re-

Religion; and *Prayer*, which is often in Scripture expreſſed by *ſeeking God*, and *calling upon his Name*, is a chief part of Religious worſhip. Hence Religion is deſcribed by *ſeeking God*, *He is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*: and by *calling upon his name*, *Whoſoever calleth upon the name of the Lord, ſhall be ſaved.* And ſo by *coming to God*, and by *departing from evil.* In this fallen ſtate of man Religion begins with *repentance* and *converſion*, the two oppoſite terms of which, are *God* and *Sin*: Hence it is that Religion is deſcribed ſometimes by *coming to God*, *He that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is*; that is, no man can be religious, unleſs he believe there is a God; ſometimes by *departing from ſin*, *And he that departeth from evil, maketh himſelf a prey*: that is, ſuch was the bad ſtate of thoſe times of which the Prophet there complains that no man could be religious but he was in danger of being perſecuted.

Heb. 11.6. Acts 2.21. Heb. 11.6. Iſa. 59.15.

II. For the fitneſs of theſe two phraſes to deſcribe Religion.

1. For the firſt, [*the fear of the Lord*] The fitneſs of this phraſe will appear, if we conſider how great an influence the fear of God hath upon men to make them

religious. Fear is a paſſion that is moſt deeply rooted in our natures, and flows immediately from that Principle of ſelf-preſervation which God hath planted in every man. Every one deſires his own preſervation and happineſs, and therefore hath a natural dread and horrour of every thing that can deſtroy his Being, or endanger his happineſs. And the greateſt *danger* is from the greateſt *power*, and that is *omnipotency*. So that *the fear of God* is an inward acknowledgment of a holy and juſt Being, which is armed with an almighty and irreſiſtible power; God having hid in every Man's Conſcience a ſecret awe and dread of his infinite power, and eternal juſtice. Now *fear* being ſo intimate to our natures, it is the ſtrongeſt bond of Laws, and the great ſecurity of our duty.

There are two bridles or reſtraints which God hath put upon humane nature, *ſhame* and *fear*. *Shame is* the weaker, and hath place onely in thoſe in whom there are ſome remainders of vertue. *Fear* is the ſtronger, and works upon all who love themſelves and deſire their own preſervation. Therefore in this degenerate ſtate of mankind, *fear* is that paſſion which hath the greateſt power

over

over us, and by which God and his Laws take the ſureſt hold of us: Our *deſire* and *love*, and *hope*, are not ſo apt to be wrought upon by the repreſentation of vertue, and the promiſes of reward and happineſs, as our *fear* is from the apprehenſions of Divine diſpleaſure. For though we have loſt in a great meaſure the guſt and reliſh of true happineſs, yet we ſtill retain a quick ſenſe of pain and miſery. So that fear relies upon a natural love of our ſelves, and is complicated with a neceſſary deſire of our own preſervation. And therefore Religion uſually makes its firſt entrance into us by this paſſion; hence perhaps it is that *Solomon* more than once *calls the fear of the Lord the beginning of wiſedom.*

2. As for the Second phraſe [*departing from evil*] the fitneſs of it to expreſs the *whole duty of man*, will appear, if we conſider the neceſſary connexion that is between the negative and poſitive part of our duty. He that is carefull to avoid all ſin will ſincerely endeavour to perform his duty. For the ſoul of man is an active principle, and will be imployed one way or other, it will be doing ſomething; if a man abſtain from evil, he will do good. Now there being ſuch a ſtrait connexion

between these, *the whole of our duty* may be expressed by either of them; but most fitly by *departing from evil*, because that is the first part of our duty. Religion begins in the forsaking of sin:

Virtus est vitium fugere, & sapientia prima Stultitia caruisse ——

Vertue begins in the forsaking of vice; and the first part of wisedom is not to be a fool.

And therefore the *Scripture*, which mentions these parts of our duty, doth constantly put *departing from evil* first; *Depart from evil and do good. Cease to do evil, learn to do well. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord.* We are first to *put off the old man which is corrupt according to deceitfull lusts*, and then *to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and to put on the new man*, &c. *Let him eschew evil and do good.*

Pſ. 34. 14. & 37. 27. Iſa. 1. 16, 17. & 55. 7. Eph. 4. 23, 24. 1 Pet. 3. 11.

To all which I may add this farther consideration, that the Law of God contained in the ten Commandments, consisting mostly of prohibitions, (*Thou shalt not* do such or such a thing) our observance of it is most fitly expressed by *departing from evil*, which yet includes obedience likewise to the positive Precepts implied in those Prohibitions.

Having thus explain'd the *Words*, I come now

now to consider the *Proposition* contain'd in them, which is this:

That *Religion is the best knowledge and wisedom.*

This I shall endeavour to make good these three ways.

1. *By a direct proof of it.*

2. *By shewing on the contrary the folly and ignorance of irreligion and wickedness.*

2. *By vindicating Religion from those common imputations which seem to charge it with ignorance or imprudence.*

I begin with the direct proof of this: And because Religion comprehends two things, the *knowledge* of the *Principles* of it, and *a suitable life and practice*; (the first of which being *speculative*, may more properly be called *knowledge*; and the latter, because 'tis *practical*, may be called *wisedom* or *prudence*) therefore I shall endeavour distinctly to prove these two things.

1. *That Religion is the best knowledge.*

2. *That 'tis the truest wisedom.*

1. First, *That it is the best knowledge.*

The knowledge of Religion commends its self to us upon these two accounts.

1. 'Tis the knowledge of those things which are in themselves most excellent.

2. Of those things which are most usefull and necessary for us to know.

First, It is the beſt knowledge, becauſe it is the knowledge of thoſe things which are in themſelves moſt *excellent* and *deſirable to be known*; and thoſe are *God*, and our *duty*. *God* is the ſum and comprehenſion of all perfection. It is delightfull to know the *Creatures*, becauſe there are particular excellencies ſcatter'd and diſpers'd among them which are ſome ſhadows of the Divine perfections: But in *God* all perfections in their higheſt degree and exaltation meet together and are united. How much more delightfull then muſt it needs be to fix our minds upon ſuch an object in which there is nothing but *beauty* and *brightneſs*, what is *amiable*, and what is *excellent*; what will *raviſh our affections and raiſe our wonder*, *pleaſe us* and *aſtoniſh* us at once; And that the finite meaſure and capacity of our underſtandings is not able to take in and comprehend the infinite perfections of God, this indeed ſhews the excellency of the object, but doth not altogether take away the delightfulneſs of the knowledge. For as it is pleaſant to the Eye to have an endleſs proſpect, ſo is it ſome pleaſure to a finite underſtanding to view unlimited excellencies which have no ſhore or bounds, though it cannot comprehend them. There is a pleaſure

ſure in admiration; and this is that which properly cauſeth admiration, when we diſcover a great deal in an object which we underſtand to be excellent, and yet we ſee we know not how much more beyond that, which our underſtandings cannot fully reach and comprehend.

And as the *knowledge of God* in his *nature* and *perfections* is excellent and deſirable, ſo likewiſe to know him in thoſe glorious manifeſtations of himſelf *in the works of Creation and Providence*; and above all, in that ſtupendious work of the *Redemption* of the world by *Jeſus Chriſt*, which was ſuch a myſtery, and ſo excellent a piece of knowledge that *the Angels* are ſaid to *deſire to pry into it*. 1 Pet. 1. 12.

And as the *knowledge of God* is excellent, ſo likewiſe of *our Duty* which is nothing elſe but *vertue* and *goodneſs* and *holineſs*, which are the image of God, a conformity to the nature and will of God, and an imitation of the Divine Excellencies and Perfections, ſo far as we are capable: For to know our duty is to know what it is to be like God in *goodneſs*, and *pity*, and *patience, and clemency*, in *pardoning injuries, and paſſing by provocations*; in *juſtice and righteouſneſs*, in *truth* and *faithfulneſs*, and in a hatred and deteſtation of the contrary

trary of these: In a word, it is to know what is the good and acceptable will of God, what it is that he loves and delights in and is pleased withall, and would have us to do in order to our perfection and our happiness. It is deservedly accounted a piece of excellent knowledge to know the *laws of the Land*, and the *customs of the Countrey* we live in, and the *will of the Prince* we live under: How much more, to know the *Statutes* of *Heaven*, and the *Laws of eternity*, those immutable and eternal rules of justice and righteousness; to know the will and pleasure of the great Monarch and universal King of the World, and the *Customs* of that *Countrey* where we must live for ever? This made *David* to admire the Law of God at that strange rate, and to advance the knowledge of it above all other knowledge, *I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad.*

Psal. 119. 96.

Secondly, 'Tis the *knowledge* of those things which are most *usefull* and *necessary* for us to know. The *goodness* of every thing is measured by its *end* and *use*, and that's the best thing which serves the best end and purpose; and the more necessary any thing is to such an end, the better it is; So that the best knowledge is that which

which is of greateſt uſe and neceſſity to us in order to our *great end*, which is *eternal happineſs*, and the *ſalvation of our Souls*. Curious ſpeculations, and the contemplation of things that are impertinent to us and do not concern us, nor ſerve to promote our happineſs, are but a more ſpecious and ingenious ſort of idleneſs, a more pardonable and creditable kind of Ignorance. That Man that doth not know thoſe things which are of uſe and neceſſity for him to know is but an ignorant man, whatever he may know beſides. Now the knowledge of *God*, and of *Chriſt*, and of our *duty*, is of the greateſt uſefulneſs and neceſſity to us in order to our happineſs. It's of abſolute neceſſity that we ſhould know *God* and *Chriſt*, in order to our being happy; *This is life eternal* (that is, the onely way to it) *to know thee the onely true God, and him whom thou haſt ſent, Jeſus Chriſt.* Joh. 17. 3. It is neceſſary alſo in order to our happineſs to know our *duty*; becauſe 'tis neceſſary for us to do it, and it is impoſſible to do it except we know it.

So that whatever other knowledge a man may be endued withall, he is but an ignorant perſon who doth not know God, the Author of his being, the preſerver and protector of his life, his Sovereign,

and

and his Judge, the giver of every good and perfect gift, his ſureſt refuge in trouble, his beſt friend or worſt enemy, the preſent ſupport of his life, his hopes in death, his future happineſs, and his portion for ever: who does not know his relation to God, the duty that he owes him, and the way to pleaſe *him* who can make him happy or miſerable for ever: who doth not know the Lord Jeſus Chriſt who is *the way, the truth, and the life.*

If a man by a vaſt and imperious mind, *and a heart large as the ſand upon the Sea-ſhore,* (as it is ſaid of *Solomon*) could command all the knowledge of *Nature* and *Art*, of *words* and *things*; could attain to a maſtery in all Languages, and found the depths of all Arts and Sciences, meaſure the earth and the heavens, and tell the ſtars, and declare their order and motions; could diſcourſe of the intereſts of all States, the intrigues of all Courts, the reaſon of all Civil laws and conſtitutions, and give an account of the Hiſtory of all ages; could ſpeak of trees, *from the Cedar-tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the Hyſop that ſprings out of the wall; and of beaſts alſo and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fiſhes:* and yet ſhould in the mean time, be deſtitute of the knowledge of *God* and *Chriſt*,

and

and his *duty*; all this would be but an impertinent vanity, and a more glittering kind of Ignorance; and ſuch a man (like the Philoſopher, who whilſt he was gazing upon the ſtars, fell into the ditch) would but *ſapienter deſcendere in infernum* be undone with all this knowledge, and with a great deal of wiſedom go down to Hell.

2. Secondly, *That to be religious is the trueſt wiſedom*, and that likewiſe upon two accounts.

1. Becauſe it is to be wiſe for our ſelves.

2. It is to be wiſe as to our main intereſt and concernment.

1. *'Tis to be wiſe for our ſelves.* There's an expreſſion, *Job* 22. 21. *He that is wiſe is profitable to himſelf*; and *Prov.* 9. 12. *If thou be wiſe, thou ſhalt be wiſe for thy ſelf:* intimating that wiſedom regards a man's own intereſt and advantage, and that he is not a wiſe man that doth not take care of himſelf and his own concernments, according to that of old *Ennius*, *nequicquam ſapere ſapientem, qui ſibi ipſi prodeſſe non quiret.* That man hath but an empty title of Wiſedom and is not really wiſe who is not wiſe for himſelf. As *ſelf-preſervation* is the firſt principle of *Nature*, ſo care of our ſelves and our own intereſt is the

the first part of *wisedom.* He that is wise in the affairs and concernments of other men, but careless and negligent of his own, that man may be said to be busie, but he is not wise: he is employed indeed, but not so as a wise man should be: Now this is the *Wisedom of Religion*, that it directs a man to a care of his own proper interest and concernment.

2. *It is to be wise as to our main interest.* Our chief end and highest interest is happiness: And this is *happiness* to be freed from all (if it may) however from the greatest evils; and to enjoy (if it may be) all good, however the chiefest. *To be happy* is not onely to be freed from the *pains* and *diseases* of the *body*, but from *anxiety* and *vexation* of *spirit*: not onely to enjoy the *pleasures* of *sense*, but *peace* of *conscience* and tranquillity of *mind*. *To be happy*, is not onely to be so for a little while, but as long as may be; and if it be possible, for ever. Now *Religion* designs our *greatest and longest happiness*; it aims at a freedom from the greatest evils, and to bring us to the possession and enjoyment of the greatest good. For Religion wisely considers that men have *immortal spirits*, which as they are *spirits* are capable of a pleasure and happiness distinct from

from that of our *bodies* and our *ſenſes*; and becauſe they are *immortal*, are capable of an everlaſting happineſs. Now our *ſouls* being the beſt part of our ſelves, and *eternity* being infinitely the moſt conſiderable duration, the greateſt *wiſedom* is to ſecure the intereſt of our *ſouls* and of *eternity* though it be with loſs and to the prejudice of our *temporal* and *inferior* Intereſts. Therefore *Religion* directs us rather to ſecure *inward peace* than *outward eaſe*, to be more carefull to avoid *everlaſting* and *intolerable torment* than *ſhort* and *light afflictions which are but for a moment*; to court *the favour* of *God* more than the *friendſhip* of the *world*, and not ſo much *to fear them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do, as him who after he hath kill'd, can deſtroy both body and ſoul in hell:* In a word, our *main intereſt* is to be *as happy as we can*, and *as long as is poſſible*; and if we be caſt into ſuch circumſtances, that we muſt be either in part and for a time or elſe wholly and always miſerable, the *beſt wiſedom* is to chuſe the *greateſt* and moſt *laſting happineſs*, but the *leaſt* and *ſhorteſt miſery*. Upon this account *Religion* prefers thoſe *pleaſures which flow from the preſence of God for evermore*, infinitely before the *tranſitory*

ſitory pleaſures of this world, and is much more carefull to avoid *eternal miſery* than *preſent ſufferings*. This is the *wiſedom of Religion*, that upon conſideration of the whole and caſting up all things together *it does adviſe and lead us to our beſt intereſt*.

II. The *Second* way of *confirmation* ſhall be by endeavouring to ſhew the ignorance and folly of irreligion. Now all that are irreligious are ſo upon one of theſe two accounts: Either, *Firſt*, becauſe they do not believe the foundations and principles of Religion, as *the exiſtence of God*, *the immortality of the ſoul*, and *future rewards*: or elſe, *Secondly*, becauſe though they do in ſome ſort believe theſe things, yet they live contrary to this their belief; and of this kind are the far greateſt part of wicked men. The *firſt* ſort are guilty of that which we call *ſpeculative*, the *other* of *practical Atheiſm*. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the Ignorance and Folly of both theſe.

Firſt *Speculative Atheiſm* is *unreaſonable*, and that upon theſe *Five* accounts. 1. Becauſe *it gives no tolerable account of the exiſtence of the world*. 2. Nor *does it give any reaſonable account of the univerſal conſent of mankind in this apprehenſion*, That there

there is a God. 3. *It requires more evidence for things than they are capable of.* 4. *The Atheiſt pretends to know that which no man can know.* 5. *Atheiſm contradicts it ſelf.*

I. Becauſe *it gives no tolerable account of the exiſtence of the world.* One of the greateſt difficulties that lies in the Atheiſt's way is, upon his own ſuppoſition *that there is no God*, to give a likely account of the exiſtence of the world. We ſee this vaſt frame of the World, and an innumerable multitude of creatures in it, all which we who believe a God attribute to *him* as the Author of them. For a *being* ſuppos'd of infinite *goodneſs* and *wiſedom* and *power* is a very likely cauſe of theſe things. What more likely to make this vaſt world, to ſtretch forth the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth, and to form theſe and all things in them of nothing, than infinite *power*? What more likely to communicate Being and ſo many degrees of happineſs to ſo many ſeveral ſorts of creatures, than infinite *goodneſs*? What more likely to contrive this admirable frame of the Univerſe and all the creatures in it, each of them ſo perfect in their kind and all of them ſo fitted to each other and to the whole, than infinite

counsel and *wisedom*. This seems to be no unreasonable account.

But let us see now what account the *Atheist* gives of these things. If there be no God there are but these *two* ways imaginable for the world to be. Either it must be said, That not onely the *Matter* but also the *Frame* of this world is eternal; and that as to the main things always were as they are without any first cause of their being; which is the way of the *Aristotelian* Atheist; (those I mean, who proceed upon *Aristotle's* supposition of the eternity of the world, but yet deny it to be from God, which he expressly asserts:) Or else the *matter* of the world being supposed to be eternal and of it self, the original of this vast and beautiful *frame* must be ascribed merely to *chance*, and the casual concourse of the parts of matter; which is the way of the *Epicurean* Atheist. But neither of these ways gives a tolerable account of the existence of the world.

1. I shall first consider the *Hypothesis* of those whom for distinction sake I call the *Aristotelian* Atheists, which is this; That not onely the matter but also the *frame* of the world is eternal, and that as to the main it was always as it is, of it self

ſelf; and that there hath been from all eternity a ſucceſſion of men and other creatures without any firſt cauſe of their being.

It ſeems to be very hard, and if that would do any good might be juſt matter of complaint, that we are fallen into ſo prophane and ſceptical an age which takes a pleaſure and a pride in unravelling almoſt all the received principles both of Religion and Reaſon: So that we are put many times to prove thoſe things which can hardly be made plainer than they are of themſelves. And ſuch almoſt are theſe Principles, *That God is*, and *That all things were made by him*; which by reaſon of the bold cavils of perverſe and unreaſonable men we are now a-days put to defend.

That ſomething is of it ſelf is evident, becauſe we ſee things are. And the things that we ſee muſt either have had ſome firſt cauſe of their being, or have been always and of themſelves. One of theſe two is unavoidable.

So that the controverſie between us and this ſort of Atheiſts comes to this; Which is the more credible opinion, that the world was never made nor had a beginning but always was as it is, and that there hath been from all eternity a ſucceſſion

of men and other creatures without any first cause of their being: or, that there was from all eternity such a *being* as we conceive *God* to be, infinite in power, goodness and wisedom, which made us and all other things; The *first* of these opinions I shall shew to be altogether incredible, and the *latter* to have all the credibility and evidence of which a thing of that nature is capable, and such evidence as is sufficient to convince any impartial and considerate man.

Now in comparing the probabilities of things, that we may know on which side the advantage lies, these two considerations are of great moment, What the arguments are on each side, and what the difficulties. For if there be fair proofs on the one side and none at all on the other, and if the most pressing difficulties be on that side on which there are no proofs: this is sufficient to render *one* opinion very credible and the *other* altogether incredible.

These *two things* therefore I shall endeavour to make good, in the matter that is now under our consideration. *First*, That there are fair proofs on our side, and as convincing as the nature of the things is capable of; but that there is no pretence

of

of proof on the other. And *Secondly*, That the ſide on which there is no proof is incumbred with the greateſt difficulties.

Firſt, That there are fair proofs on our ſide, and as convincing as the nature of the thing is capable of; but that there is no pretence of proof on the other.

This Queſtion, *Whether the world was created and had a beginning, or not?* is a queſtion concerning *an ancient matter of fact*, which can onely be decided theſe two ways; by *teſtimony*, and by *probabilities of reaſon*. *Teſtimony*, is the principal argument in a matter of this nature, and if fair *probabilities of reaſon* concur with it this argument hath all the ſtrength it can have: Now both theſe are clearly on the affirmative ſide of the queſtion, *viz.* That the world was created, and had a beginning.

1. *Teſtimony*; of which there be two kinds, *Divine*, and *Humane*.

Divine teſtimony, as ſuch, is not proper to be us'd in this cauſe conſidering the occaſion of the preſent debate: For that would be to beg the firſt and main queſtion now in controverſie, which is, Whether there be a God or not? which a teſtimony from God does ſuppoſe, and therefore ought not to be brought for the proof

of it. 'Tis true indeed that those effects of Divine Power, I mean miracles, which will prove a divine testimony to an infidel, will as well prove the being of a God to an Atheist; But when we dispute against those who deny a God no testimony ought to be presum'd to be from God, but must be prov'd to be so. And whatever argument proves that will also prove that there is a God.

Humane testimonies are of two sorts; *universal tradition*, and *written History*. Both these are plainly and beyond dispute on our side.

First, There is an *universal tradition* concerning the beginning of the world, and that it was made by God. And for the evidence of this we have the concurring Tradition of the most *ancient* Nations, the *Egyptians* and *Phœnicians* *; and of the most *barbarous* the *Indians*; who as *Strabo*‖ tells us, *did in many things agree with the Grecians*, particularly in this, *that the world did begin, and should have an end; and that God the maker and governour of it, is present in all parts of it.* And *Acosta* tells us, that at the first discovery of *America*, the inhabitants of *Peru* did worship one chief God, under the name or title of *The Maker of the*

*Vid. Grot. de verit. Chr. Relig. L. 1.

‖ Geograph. L. 15.

Un-

Universe: And yet these people had not had any commerce with the other known parts of the world, for God knows how many ages.

To which may be added, that the most ancient of the Philosophers, and those that were the heads of the chief Sects of Philosophy, as *Thales*, *Anaxagoras* and *Pythagoras* did likewise consent to this Tradition. Particularly concerning *Thales*, *Tully* * tells us that he was *the first* of all the Philosophers *that enquired into these things, and he said, that water was the beginning of all things, and that God was that mind* (or intelligent Principle) *which fashioned all things out of water*. So likewise *Strabo* * informs us that the *Brachmans*, the chief Sect of Philosophers among the *Indians*, agreed with the *Grecians* in this, *That the world was made of water*. Which agrees exactly with *Moses's* account of the Creation, viz. *That the Spirit of God moved upon the face of waters*; which St. *Peter* * expresses thus, *That by the word of God the heavens and the earth* (for so the Hebrews call the *world*) *were of old* ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ δι' ὕδατος συνεστῶσα *constituted or made of water*; not *standing out of the water*, as our Translation renders it.

* De Nat. Deorum L. 1.

* Geogr. L. 15.

* 2 Pet. 3. 5.

Nay *Ariſtotle* * himſelf, who was the great aſſerter of the eternity of the world, gives this account why the Gods were anciently repreſented by the Heathens as ſwearing by the lake *Styx*, becauſe *water* was ſuppoſed to be the *principle of all things*. And this, he tells us, was the *moſt ancient opinion* concerning the original of the world; and that the *very oldeſt Writers of Theology*, and thoſe who liv'd *at the greateſt diſtance from his time*, were of this mind. And in the Book *de Mundo* * it is freely acknowledg'd to have been an ancient ſaying, and a general Tradition among all men, *That all things are of God, and were made by him.* I will conclude this with that full Teſtimony of *Maximus Tyrius* * to this purpoſe: *However* (ſays he) *men may differ in other things, yet they all agree in this* Law *or* Principle, *that there is one God, King and Father of all things*, &c. *This the* Greeks *ſay, this the* Barbarians; *this thoſe that live upon the Continent, and thoſe that dwell by the Sea; the wiſe and the unwiſe.*

* Metaph. L. 1. c. 3.

* Cap. 6.

* Differtat. 1.

Secondly, We have likewiſe a moſt *ancient* and credible *Hiſtory* of the beginning of the world; I mean the Hiſtory of *Moſes*, with which no Book in the world in point of antiquity can contend. I ſhall not

not now go about to ſtrengthen my argument, by pleading the Divine authority of this Book; for which yet I could offer good evidence, if that were proper to the matter in hand. It is ſufficient to my preſent purpoſe, that *Moſes* have the ordinary credit of an Hiſtorian given him, which none in reaſon can deny him, he being cited by the moſt ancient of the Heathen Hiſtorians, and the antiquity of his writings never queſtioned by any of them, as *Joſephus** aſſures us.

* L. 1. contra *Appion.*

Now this Hiſtory of *Moſes* gives us a particular account of the beginning of the world, and of the creation of it by God. Which aſſertion of his is agreeable to the moſt ancient *Writers* among the *Heathen*, whether *Poets* or *Hiſtorians*. And ſeveral of the main parts of *Moſes*'s Hiſtory, as concerning the *Floud*, and the *firſt Fathers* of the *ſeveral Nations* of the World (of which he gives a particular account, *Gen.* 10.) do very well accord with the moſt ancient accounts of *Prophane* Hiſtory. And I do not know, whether any thing ought more to recommend the Writings of *Moſes* to a humane belief, than the eaſie and credible account which he gives of the original of the World, and of the firſt peopling of it.

As

As to the account of ancient times, both the *Egyptian* and *Chaldean* accounts, which are pretended by some to be so vastly different from that of the *Scriptures*, may for all that be, near the matter, easily reconcil'd with it *; if we do but admit what *Diodorus Siculus* and *Plutarch*, very credible persons and diligent searchers into ancient Books, do most expresly assure us, *viz.* that both those *Nations* did anciently reckon months for years. And the account of the *Chineses* is not hard to be reconcil'd with that of the *Septuagint*. Now in so nice and obscure a matter, as the account of ancient times is, it ought to satisfie any fair and reasonable enquirer if they can be brought any whit near one another.

* Vid. Dr. *Stillingfleet's Orig. Sac.* where this is fully made out.

So that *universal Tradition* and the most *ancient History* in the world are clearly on our side. And if they be, one can hardly wish a more convincing argument. For if the world and consequently mankind had a beginning, there is all the reason in the world to expect these two things: *First*, that there should be an *universal Tradition*, concerning this matter; because it was the most memorable thing that could be transmitted to posterity. And this was easie to be done, if mankind sprang from one common

common *root* and *original*, from whence this *Tradition* would naturally be universally diffus'd. *Secondly*, it may with the same reason be expected, that so remarkable a *thing* should be recorded in the most ancient *History*. Now both these have accordingly happened. But then on the other hand, if the world was eternal and had no beginning there could be no real ground for such a *Tradition* or *History*. And if such a Tradition were at any time endeavoured to be set on foot, it is not easie to imagine how it should at first gain entertainment, but much more difficult to conceive how ever it should come to be *universally* propagated. For upon the *supposition* of those who hold the eternity of the world, the world was always peopled; and if so, there could be no common head or spring from whence such a *Tradition* would naturally derive it self into all parts of the world. So that unless all the world was sometime of one *language*, and under one *Government* (which it never was that we know of since it was peopled) no endeavour and industry could make such a Tradition common.

If it be said, that this Tradition began after some universal deluge, out of which possibly but one family might escape, and that

that possibly too of barbarous people; from whom any fond and groundless conceit might spring, and afterwards spread it self as mankind encreas'd. This I shall have occasion to consider in a more proper place. In the mean time I have shewn, even from the acknowledgment of *Aristotle* himself, that there was anciently such a Tradition concerning the beginning of the world. Nay, if we may believe him, he himself was the very first asserter of the eternity of the world. For he * says expresly, *That all the Philosophers that were before him, did hold that the world was made.* Thus much for the *first* kind of *proof* this matter is capable of, namely, *testimony.*

*De Cœlo. l. 1. c. 10.

2*dly*, The *probabilities of reason* do all likewise favour the beginning of the world: As

1. The want of any *History* or *Tradition* ancienter than what is consistent with the received opinion of the time of the worlds beginning; nay, the most ancient Histories were written long after that time. This *Lucretius*, the famous *Epicurean*, urgeth as a strong presumption that the world had a beginning

——— *Si nulla fuit genitalis origo*
Terrarum & Cœli, semperque æterna fuere:
Cur

Cur ſupra bellum Thebanum, & funera Trojæ,
Non alias alii quoque res cecinere Poetæ?
i. e. *If the world had no beginning, how is it that the Greek Poets* (the moſt ancient of their *Writers*) *mention nothing higher than the* Theban *war, and the deſtruction of* Troy? Were there from all eternity no memorable actions done till about that time? Or had mankind no way till of late to record them and propagate the memory of them to poſterity? It is much if men were from eternity, that they ſhould not find out the way of writing in all that *long* duration, which had paſt before that Time. Sure he was a fortunate man indeed, who after men had been eternally ſo dull as not to find it out, had the luck at laſt to hit upon it.

But it may be, the famous actions of former times were always recorded, but that the memorials of them have been ſeveral times loſt by univerſal deluges, which have now and then happen'd and ſwept all away, except (it may be) two or three perſons, that have eſcap'd and begun the world again upon a new ſcore. This is the onely refuge that the *Atheiſt* hath to fly to, when he is preſt with this and the like arguments. But he cannot poſſibly eſcape this way. For theſe univerſal inundations

muſt

must either be *natural* or *supernatural*. If they be *supernatural*, (as any man that considers well the frame of the world, and how hard it is to give a natural reason of them, would be enclin'd to think) then indeed it is easie to conceive how a few of mankind, and no more, should escape. Because this will depend upon the pleasure of that superior Being which is supposed supernaturally to order these things. But this is to yield what we have all this while contended for, *viz.* That there is a God. But if they be *natural*, which the *Atheist* must say, then there is nothing to restrain them from a total destruction, not onely of mankind, but of all the beasts of the earth. This the *Atheist* cannot deny, not onely to be very possible, but exceeding probable; because he grants it to have come so near the matter, that but very few escap'd, and no doubt with great difficulty. Now it is the greatest wonder in the world, that a thing (according to their own supposition) so likely to happen, should never have fallen out in an infinite duration. Will any man have the face to say that a thing is likely which did never yet happen from all eternity? One would think that not onely whatever is probable, but whatever can possibly hap-

pen

pen, ſhould be brought about in that ſpace: So that if mankind had been from eternity it had in all probability, I had almoſt ſaid, been deſtroyed from all eternity, but I may confidently ſay, long ſince ruin'd.

2. Another *probability* of the worlds beginning is, the account which we have of the *original of Learning and the moſt uſefull Arts* in ſeveral parts of the world. Now if the world had been eternal, theſe in all likelihood would have been found out, and generally ſpread long ago and beyond the memory of all ages. There are ſome *Arts* indeed that are peculiarly convenient to ſome particular Nations; and others that are onely ſerviceable to the humour and faſhion of one or more ages. Theſe are not likely to ſpread, and they may come in, and go out, and return again as often as there is occaſion. But thoſe which are generally uſefull to mankind in all times and places, if they were once found out (and who would not think they ſhould in an eternal duration?) it is not imaginable but that they ſhould have been ſpread innumerable ages ſince: Nor can any man give a good reaſon how they ſhould ever be loſt, but by ſome ſuch accident as an univerſal deluge, which has been ſpoken to already. But now on the contrary, the beginnings of

of *Learning* and of the most usefull *Arts* in several Nations, is very well known. And I add farther, that where-ever Learning and Civil Arts have come this *Tradition* concerning the *beginning of the world* hath been most vigorous, and asserted with the greatest clearness and confidence.

3. The several parts of which the world consists, being (so far as by those parts of it which we know, we can possibly judge of the rest) in their nature corruptible; it is more than probable, that in an infinite duration this frame of things would long since have been dissolv'd; especially, if (as the *Atheist* affirms) there be no superior being, no wise and intelligent principle to repair and regulate it, and to prevent those innumerable disorders and calamitous accidents, which must in so long a space in all probability have happen'd to it. This *Lucretius* * also urges as a convincing proof that the world was not eternal,

* L. 5.

Quare etiam nativa necesse est confiteare
Hæc eadem neq; enim mortali corpore quæ sunt
Ex infinito jam tempore adhuc potuissent
Immensi validas ævi contemnere vires.

It must necessarily (says he) *be acknowledg'd that the world had a beginning; otherwise*

wise those things which are in their own nature corruptible had never been able, from all eternity to have held out against those forcible and violent assaults which in an infinite duration must have happened. Nay, thus much *Aristotle* himself every where grants, that if the frame of the world be liable to dissolution, it must of necessity be acknowledg'd to have had a beginning.

These are some of the chief Probabilities on our side; which being taken together, and in their united force, have a great deal of conviction in them. Especially if this be added, that there is no kind of positive proof so much as pretended on the other side. The utmost that *Aristotle* pretends to prove, is, That the world proceeded from God by the way of a natural and necessary effect, as light does from the Sun. Which if it be true (as there is no tolerable ground for it) the World indeed would be without beginning, but not of it self. And thus I have done with the *first* consideration I propounded to speak to, viz. *That there are fair proofs on our side, and as convincing as the nature of the thing is capable of; but that there is no pretence or proof on the other.* I proceed therefore to the

Second Consideration, That the most pressing difficulties are on that side on which there is no proof.

Those who deny a God, and hold the world to have been eternal and of it self, have only two things to object against us: The difficulties that there are in the *notion of a God, and in making the world of nothing.* To the *first* I answer: That we attribute nothing to God that hath any repugnancy or contradiction in it. *Power, wisdom, goodness, justice,* and *truth,* have no repugnancy in them to our reason; because we own these Perfections to be in some degree in ourselves, and therefore they may be in the highest degree that is possible in another. The *eternity* of God and his *immensity,* and his *being of himself,* how difficult soever they may be to be conceived, yet these perfections must be granted to be somewhere; and therefore they may as well, may much better, be ascribed to God, in whom we suppose all other perfections to meet, than to any thing else. And as for God's being a *spirit,* whatever difficulty there may be in conceiving the notion of a *spirit,* yet the *atheist* must grant the thing, that there is a being or principle really distinct from matter; or else shew how matter

matter, which is confeſſed by themſelves to be void of ſenſe and underſtanding, and to move neceſſarily, can produce any thing that has ſenſe, underſtanding and liberty. As to the *other* difficulty, of *making the world of nothing*, I ſhall onely ſay this: that though it ſignifie an inconceivable exceſs of power, yet there can no contradiction be ſhewn in it And it is every whit as eaſie to conceive that ſomething ſhould be caus'd to be that was not before, as that any thing ſhould be of it ſelf; which yet muſt be granted on both ſides; and therefore this difficulty ought not to be objected by either.

But then on the other ſide there are theſe *two* great and real difficulties. *First*, That men generally have always believed the contrary, *viz.* That the World had a beginning, and was made by God. Which is a ſtrong evidence that this account of the exiſtence of the world is more natural, and of a more eaſie conception to humane underſtanding. And indeed it is very natural to conceive that every thing which is imperfect (as the world and all the creatures in it muſt be acknowledged in many reſpects to be) had ſome cauſe which produc'd it, ſuch as it is, and determin'd the bounds and

limits of its perfection: but that which is of it self and without a cauſe, may be any thing, and have any perfection which does not imply a contradiction. *Secondly*, To aſſert mankind to have been of it ſelf, and without a cauſe, hath this invincible objection againſt it; that we plainly ſee every man to be from another. So that mankind is aſſerted to have no cauſe of its being, and yet every particular man muſt be acknowledged to have a father; which is every whit as abſurd in an infinite ſucceſſion of men, as in any finite number of generations. It is more eaſie indeed to conceive how a conſtant and permanent being, ſuppoſe *matter*, ſhould always have been of it ſelf; and then that *that* ſhould be the foundation of infinite ſucceſſive changes and alterations: But an infinite ſucceſſion of the generations of men without any permanent foundation, is utterly unimaginable. If it be ſaid that the *earth* was always, and in time did produce *men*, and that they ever ſince have produc'd one another; this is to run into one great abſurdity of the *Epicurean* way, which ſhall be conſider'd in its proper place.

And thus I have endeavour'd as plainly and briefly as the nature of the Argument

ment would admit, to prove that the account which the *Scripture* gives of the exiſtence of the world, is moſt credible, and agreeable to the reaſon of mankind; and that this *Firſt* account which the *Atheiſt* gives of it, is altogether incredible. And now I expect after all this the *Atheiſt* will complain, that all that hath been ſaid does not amount to a *ſtrict demonſtration* of the thing. It may be ſo. And if the Atheiſt would undertake to *demonſtrate* the contrary, there might be ſome reaſon for this complaint. In the mean time I deſire to know whether when both ſides are agreed that the world is, and that it muſt either have its original from God, or have been always of it ſelf; and if it have been made evident, that on *one ſide* there are fair *proofs* both from *teſtimony* and *reaſon* and as convincing as the nature of the thing is capable of, and no pretence of proof on the *other*; and that the *difficulties* are moſt preſſing on that *ſide* which is deſtitute of proof; I ſay, if this have been made evident, I deſire to know whether this be not upon the matter as ſatisfactory to a wiſe man as a *demonſtration*? For in this caſe there can be no doubt on which ſide the clear advantage of evidence lies, and conſequently

ſequently which way a prudent man ought to determine aſſent. †

I come now in the *Second* place, to conſider the *other account* which another ſort of *Atheiſts*, thoſe whom I call the *Epicurean*, do give of the exiſtence of the world. And 'tis this. They ſuppoſe the matter of which the world is conſtituted to be eternal and of it ſelf, and then an infinite empty ſpace for the infinite little parts of this matter (which they call *Atomes*) to move and play in; and that theſe being always in motion did after infinite trials and encounters, without any counſel or deſign and without the diſpoſal and contrivance of any wiſe and intelligent being, at laſt by a lucky caſualty entangle and ſettle themſelves in this beautifull and regular frame of the world which we now ſee. And that the earth, being at firſt in its full vigor and fruitfulneſs, did then bring forth men and all other ſorts of living creatures as it does plants now.

This is in ſhort the *Epicurean* account of the original of the world, which as abſurd as it is *Lucretius* * hath very elegantly expreſſed in theſe verſes.

* *L.* 5.

Sed quibus ille modis conjectus materiai,
Fundarit cœlum ac terram, ponticque profunda,
Solisque & lunæ cursus, ex ordine ponam.
Nam certè neque consilio primordia rerum
Ordine se quæque, atque sagaci mente locarunt.
Nec quos quæque darent motus pepigere profecto.
Sed quia multa modis multis primordia rerum
Ex infinito jam tempore percita plagis
Ponderibusque suis consuerunt concita ferri,
Omnimodisque coire, atque omnia pertentare,
Quæcunque inter se possent congressa creare.
Propterea fit, uti magnum vulgata per ævum
Omnigenos cœtus, & motus experiundo,
Tandem ea conveniant, quæ ut convenere, re-
Magnarum rerum fiunt exordia sæpe, [pente
Terrai, maris & cœli, generisque animantum.

Thus he like a good *Poet*, but a very bad maker and contriver of the world. For I appeal to any man of reason whether any thing can be more unreasonable, than obstinately to impute an effect to chance which carries in the very face of it all the arguments and characters of a wise design, and contrivance? Was ever any considerable work, in which there was required a great variety of parts and a regular and orderly disposition of those parts, done by chance? Will chance fit means to ends, and that in ten thousand instances, and

not fail in any one? How often might a man after he had jumbled a ſet of letters in a bag, fling them out upon the ground before they would fall into an exact Poem, yea or ſo much as make a good diſcourſe in Proſe? And may not a little *Book* be as eaſily made by chance, as this great *Volume* of the world? How long might a man be in ſprinkling colours upon Canvas with a careleſs hand, before they would happen to make the exact Picture of a man? And is a man eaſier made by chance than his Picture? How long might twenty thouſand *blind men*, which ſhould be ſent out from the ſeveral remote parts of *England*, wander up and down before they would all meet upon *Salisbury plains* and fall into rank and file in the exact order of an Army? And yet this is much more eaſie to be imagined, than how the innumerable blind parts of matter ſhould rendezvous themſelves into a world. A man that ſees *Henry* the *Seventh's* Chapel at *Weſtminſter* might with as good reaſon maintain (yea with much better, conſidering the vaſt difference betwixt that little ſtructure and the huge fabrick of the world) that it was never contrived or built by any man, but that the ſtones did by chance grow into thoſe curious

figures

figures into which they ſeem to have been cut and graven; and that *upon a time* (as tales uſually begin) the materials of that building, the ſtone, morter, timber, iron, lead and glaſs, happily met together and very fortunately rang'd themſelves into that delicate order in which we ſee them now ſo cloſe compacted that it muſt be a very great chance that parts them again. What would the world think of a man that ſhould advance ſuch an opinion as this, and write a Book for it? If they would do him right, they ought to look upon him as mad: but yet with a little more reaſon than any man can have to ſay that the world was made by chance: or that the firſt men grew up out of the earth as plants do now. For can any thing be more ridiculous and againſt all reaſon, than to aſcribe the production of men to the firſt fruitfulneſs of the earth, without ſo much as one inſtance and experiment in any Age or Hiſtory to countenance ſo monſtrous a ſuppoſition? The thing is at firſt-ſight ſo groſs and palpable, that no diſcourſe about it can make it more apparent. And yet theſe ſhamefull beggars of Principles, who give this precarious account of the original of things, aſſume to themſelves to be the men of reaſon, the great

great wits of the world the onely *cautious* and wary perſons that hate to be impoſed upon, that muſt have convincing evidence for every thing, and can admit of nothing without a clear demonſtration for it.

II. *Speculative atheiſm* is unreaſonable, becauſe it gives no reaſonable account of the *univerſal conſent* of mankind in this apprehenſion, *that there is a God*. That men do generally believe a God, and have done in all Ages, the preſent experience of the world and the records of former times do abundantly teſtify. Now how comes this perſwaſion to have gained ſo univerſal a poſſeſſion of the mind of man, and to have found ſuch general entertainment in all nations, even thoſe that are moſt barbarous? If there be no ſuch thing as God in the world, how comes it to paſs that this object doth continually encounter our underſtandings? Whence is it that we are ſo perpetually haunted with the apparition of a Deity, and followed with it wherever we go? If it be not natural to the mind of man, but proceeds from ſome accidental diſtemper of our underſtandings, how comes it to be ſo univerſal that no differences of age, or temper, or education can wear it out, and ſet any conſiderable number

number of men free from it? Into what can we reſolve this ſtrong inclination of mankind to this error and miſtake? How come all Nations to be thus ſeduced? It is altogether unimaginable but that the reaſon of ſo univerſal a conſent in all places and ages of the world, and among all differences of perſons, ſhould be one and conſtant. But no one and conſtant reaſon of this can be given, but from the nature of man's mind and underſtanding which hath this notion of a Deity born with it and ſtamped upon it; or which is all one, is of ſuch a frame that in the free uſe and exerciſe of it ſelf it will find out God: And what more reaſonable than to think, that if we be God's workmanſhip he ſhould ſet this mark of himſelf upon all reaſonable creatures, that they may know to whom they belong, and may acknowledge the *Author* of their beings? This ſeems to be a credible and ſatisfactory account of ſo *univerſal* a *conſent* in this matter. But now what doth the *Atheiſt* reſolve this into? He is not at one with himſelf what account to give of it, nor can it be expected he ſhould. For he that will over-look the true reaſon of a thing which uſually is but one, may eaſily find many falſe ones, error being infinite. But there are *three*

which

which he principally relies upon, *fear*, *tradition*, and *policy of State*. I ſhall briefly conſider theſe.

Firſt, He would make us believe that this apprehenſion of a God doth ſpring from an infinite *jealouſie* in the mind of man, and an endleſs fear of the worſt that may happen; according to that *divine ſaying* of the Poet, which he can never ſufficiently admire,

Primum in orbe Deos fecit timor,——
Fear firſt made Gods. So that it is granted on both ſides that the *fear* of a *Deity* doth univerſally poſſeſs the minds of men. Now the queſtion is, whether it be more likely that the exiſtence of a God ſhould be the cauſe of this fear, or that this fear ſhould be the cauſe why men imagine there is a God? if there be a God, who hath impreſſed this image of himſelf upon the mind of Man, there's great reaſon why all men ſhould ſtand in awe of him: But if there be no God, it is not eaſie to conceive how fear ſhould create an univerſal confidence and aſſurance in men that there is one. For, whence ſhould this fear come? It muſt be either from without, from the ſuggeſtion of others who firſt tell us there is ſuch a *being*, and then our fear believes it; or elſe it muſt ariſe from within, from the nature of man which is apt to fanſie

dreadfull

dreadfull and terrible things. If from the ſuggeſtion of others who tell us ſo, the queſtion returns, who told *them* ſo? and will never be ſatisfied till the firſt Author of this report be found out. So that this account of *fear* reſolves it ſelf into *tradition*, which ſhall be ſpoken to in its proper place. But if it be ſaid that this fear ariſeth from within, from the nature of man which is apt to imagine dreadfull things, this likewiſe is liable to inexplicable difficulties. For, *Firſt*, the proper object of fear, is ſomething that is dreadfull, that is, ſomething that threatens men with harm or danger; and that in God muſt either be power or juſtice; and ſuch an object as this fear indeed may create: But goodneſs and mercy are eſſential to the notion of a God as well as power and juſtice: now how ſhould fear put men upon fanſying a being that is infinitely good and mercifull? No man hath reaſon to be afraid of ſuch a being, as ſuch. So that the *Atheiſt* muſt joyn another cauſe to fear, *viz.* hope, to enable men to create this imagination of a God. And what would the product of theſe two contrary paſſions be? the imagination of a being which we ſhould fear would do us as much harm as we could hope it would do us

good;

good; which would be *quid pro quo*, and which our reason would oblige us to lay aside so soon as we have fancied it, because it would signifie just nothing. But, *Secondly*, suppose fear alone could do it; how comes the mind of man to be subject to such groundless and unreasonable fears? The *Aristotelian* Atheist will say, it always was so; But this is to affirm, and not to give any account of a thing. The *Epicurean* Atheist, if he will speak conformably to himself, must say that there happened in the original constitution of the first men such a contexture of *Atomes* as doth naturally dispose men to these panick fears; unless he will say that the first men when they grew out of the earth and afterwards broke loose from their root, finding themselves weak and naked and unarmed and meeting with several fierce Creatures stronger than themselves, they were put into such a fright as did a little distemper their understandings and let loose their imaginations to endless suspicions and unbounded jealousies, which did at last settle in the conceit of an invisible *being* infinitely powerfull and able to do them harm; and being fully possest with this apprehension (nothing being more ordinary than for crazed persons to believe their

own

own fancies) they became religious; and afterwards when mankind began to be propagated in the way of generation, then Religion obliged them to inſtill theſe *Principles* into their Children in their tender years that ſo they might make the greater impreſſion upon them; and this courſe having been continued ever ſince the notion of a God hath been kept up in the world. This is very ſuitable to *Epicurus* his *Hypotheſis* of the original of men; But if any man think fit to ſay thus I cannot think it fit to confute him. *Thirdly*, whether men were from all eternity ſuch timorous and fanciful Creatures, or happened to be made ſo in the firſt conſtitution of things, it ſeems however that this *fear* of a Deity hath a foundation in nature. And if it be natural, ought we not rather to conclude that there is ſome ground and reaſon for theſe *fears*, and that nature hath not planted them in us to no purpoſe, than that they are vain and groundleſs? There is no principle that *Ariſtotle* (the great aſſertor of the eternity of the world) doth more frequently inculcate than this, *That nature doeth nothing in vain*; and the *Atheiſt* himſelf is forc'd to acknowledge (and ſo every man muſt who attentively conſiders the frame of the world) That although

though things were made by chance, yet they have happen'd as well as if the greatest wisedom had the ordering and contriving of them. And surely wisedom would never have planted such a vain principle as the fear of a Deity in the nature of man, if there had not been a God in the world.

Secondly, If *fear* be not a sufficient account of this universal consent, the *Atheist* thinks it may very probably be resolved into *universal Tradition*. But this likewise is liable to great exception. For, whence came this Tradition? It must begin some time, it must have its original from some body; and it were very well worth our knowing who that man was that first raised this spirit which all the reason of mankind could never conjure down since. *Where* did he live, and *when*? In what *Countrey*, and in what *Age* of the world? *What was his name, or his sons name, that we may know him?* This the Atheist can give no punctual account of: onely he imagines it not improbable that some body long ago (no body knows when) beyond the memory of all Ages did start such a notion in the world and that it hath past for current ever since. But if this *Tradition* be granted so very ancient as to have been before all Books

and

and to be elder than any History, it may for any thing any body can tell have been from the beginning; and then it is much more likely to be a notion which was bred in the mind of man and born with him, than a *Tradition* transmitted from hand to hand through all Generations; especially if we consider how many rude and barbarous Nations there are in the world which consent in the opinion of a God, and yet have scarce any certain *Tradition* of any thing that was done among them but two or three Ages before.

Thirdly, But if neither of these be satisfactory, he hath one way more; which although it signifie little to men of sober and severe Reason, yet it very unhappily hits the jealous and suspicious humour of the generality of men, who from the experience they have had of themselves and others are very apt to suspect that every body, but especially their Superiours and Governours, have a design to impose upon them for their own ends. In short, it is this: that this noise about a God is a mere State-Engine and a Politick device, invented at first by some great Prince or Minister of State, to keep People in awe and order. And if so, from hence (saith the Atheist) we may easily apprehend how

from such an original it might be generally propagated and become universally current, having the stamp of publick authority upon it. Besides, that people have always been found easie to comply with the inclinations of their Prince. And from hence likewise we may see the reason why this notion had continued so long. For being found by experience to be so excellent an instrument of government we may be sure it would always be cherished and kept up.

And now he triumphs, and thinks the business is very clear: Thus it was, some time or other, (most probably towards the beginning of the world, if it had a beginning, when all mankind was under one universal Monarch) some great *Nebuchadnezzar* set up this *Image* of a *Deity*, and commanded *all people and Nations to fall down and worship it*: And this being found a successfull device to awe people into obedience to government, it hath been continued to this day, and is like to last to the end of the world. To this fine Conjecture I have these four things to say:

1. That all this is mere conjecture and supposition; he cannot bring the least shadow of proof or evidence for any one tittle of it.

2. This

2. This ſuppoſition grants the opinion of a God to conduce very much to the ſupport of government and order in the world; and conſequently to be very beneficial to mankind. So that the Atheiſt cannot but acknowledge that it is great pity that it ſhould not be true, and that it is the common intereſt of mankind, if there were but probable Arguments for it, not to admit of any ſlight reaſons againſt it; and to puniſh all thoſe who would ſeduce men to Atheiſm, as the great diſturbers of the world and peſts of humane Society.

3. This ſuppoſition can have nothing of certainty in it unleſs this be true, *that whoever makes a politick advantage of other mens principles ought to be preſumed to contrive thoſe principles into them.* Whereas it is much more common (becauſe more eaſie) for men to ſerve their own ends of thoſe principles or opinions which they do not put into men but find there. So that if the queſtion of a God were to be decided by the probability of this conjecture, (which the Atheiſt applauds himſelf moſt in) it would be concluded in the affirmative; It being much more likely, ſince Politicians reap the advantages of obedience and a more ready ſubmiſſion to government from mens believing that there

is a God, that they found the minds of men prepoſſeſſed to their hands with the notion of a God, than that they planted it there.

4. We have as much evidence of the contrary to this ſuppoſition as ſuch a thing is capable of, *viz.* that it was not an *arcanum imperii*, a *ſecret of government* to propagate the belief of a God among the people when the Governours themſelves knew it to be a cheat. For we find in the Hiſtories of all Ages of which we have any records, (and of other Ages we cannot poſſibly judge) that Princes have not been more ſecure from troubles of conſcience and the fears of Religion and the terrors of another world, (nay many of them more ſubject to theſe) than other men, as I could give many inſtances, and thoſe no mean ones: What made *Caligula* creep under the bed when it thunder'd? What made *Tiberius*, that great Maſter of the crafts of government complain ſo much of the grievous *ſtings* and *laſhes* he felt in his Conſcience? What made *Cardinal Wolſey* (that great Miniſter of State in our own Nation) to pour forth his ſoul in thoſe ſad words, *Had I been as diligent to pleaſe my God as I have been to pleaſe my King, he would not have forſaken me now in my gray hairs?* What reaſon for ſuch actions and ſpeeches, if

theſe

theſe great men had known that Religion was but a cheat? But if they knew nothing of this ſecret, I think we may ſafely conclude that the notion of a God did not come from the Court, that it was not the invention of Politicians and a juggle of State to cozen the people into obedience.

And now from all this that hath been ſaid it ſeems to be very evident, that the general conſent of mankind in this apprehenſion *that there is a God* muſt in all reaſon be aſcribed to ſome more certain and univerſal cauſe than *fear* or *tradition* or *State-policy*, *viz.* to *this* that God himſelf hath wrought this image of himſelf upon the mind of man, and ſo woven it into the very frame of his being that (like *Phidias* his Picture in *Minerva*'s Shield) it can never totally be defaced without the ruine of humane nature.

I know but one *Objection* that this diſcourſe is liable to, which is this; That the univerſal conſent of mankind in the apprehenſion of a God is no more an Argument that *He* really is, than the general agreement of ſo many Nations for ſo many Ages in the worſhip of many Gods is an Argument that there are many.

To this I anſwer, 1. That the generality of the *Philoſophers* and wiſe men of

all Nations and Ages, did diſſent from the multitude in theſe things. They believed but one Supreme Deity, which with reſpect to the various benefits men received from him had ſeveral titles beſtowed upon him. And although they did ſervilely comply with the people in worſhipping God, by ſenſible images and repreſentations, yet it appears by their writings that they deſpiſed this way of worſhip as ſuperſtitious and unſuitable to the nature of God. So that *Polytheiſm* and *Idolatry* are far from being able to pretend to univerſal conſent from their having had the vote of the multitude in moſt Nations for ſeveral Ages together. Becauſe the opinion of the vulgar ſeparated from the conſent and approbation of the wiſe, ſignifies no more than a great many cyphers would do without figures.

2. The groſs ignorance and miſtakes of the *Heathen* about God and his worſhip are a good argument that there is a God; becauſe they ſhew that men ſunk into the moſt degenerate condition, into the greateſt blindneſs and darkneſs imaginable, do yet retain ſome ſenſe and awe of a Deity; that Religion is a property of our natures and that the notion of a Deity is intimate to our underſtandings and ſticks cloſe to them.

them, ſeeing men will rather have any God than none; and rather than want a Deity they will worſhip any thing.

3. That there have been ſo many falſe Gods deviſ'd, is rather an argument that there is a true one than that there is none. There would be no counterfeits but for the ſake of ſomething that is real. For though all pretenders ſeem to be what they really are not, yet they pretend to be ſomething that really is. For to counterfeit is to put on the likeneſs and appearance of ſome real excellency. There would be no Braſs-money if there were not good and lawfull money. *Briſtol-Stones* would not pretend to be Diamonds, if there never had been any Diamonds. Thoſe *Idols* in *Henry* the ſeventh's time (as Sir *Francis Bacon* calls them) *Lambert Simnell* and *Perkin Warbeck*, had never been ſet up if there had not once been a real *Plantagenet* and *Duke* of *York*. So the *Idols* of the Heathen though they be ſet up in affront to the true God, yet they rather prove that there is *one* than the contrary.

III. *Speculative Atheiſm* is abſurd, becauſe it requires more evidence for things than they are capable of. *Ariſtotle* hath long ſince well obſerved, how unreaſonable it is to expect the ſame kind of proof

and evidence for every thing, which we have for ſome things. *Mathematical* things, being of an abſtracted nature are capable of the cleareſt and ſtricteſt *Demonſtration*: But Concluſions in *Natural Philoſophy* are capable of proof by an *Induction* of experiments; things of a *moral* nature by *moral* arguments; and *matters of fact* by *credible teſtimony*. And though none of theſe be capable of that ſtrict kind of *demonſtration*, which Mathematical matters are; yet have we an undoubted aſſurance of them, when they are proved by the beſt arguments that things of that kind will bear. No man can demonſtrate to me (unleſs we will call every argument that is fit to convince a wiſe man a demonſtration) that there is ſuch an *Iſland* in *America* as *Jamaica*. Yet upon the teſtimony of credible perſons who have ſeen it, and Authors who have written of it, I am as free from all doubt concerning it, as I am from doubting of the cleareſt Mathematical demonſtration. So that this is to be entertained as a firm *Principle* by all thoſe who pretend to be certain of any thing at all: *That when any thing in any of theſe kinds, is proved by as good Arguments as a thing of that kind is capable of, and we have as great aſſurance that it is as we could poſſibly have*

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ſuppoſing it were, we ought not in reaſon to make any doubt of the exiſtence of that thing.

Now to apply this to the preſent caſe. The being of a God is not *Mathematically* demonſtrable, nor can it be expected it ſhould, becauſe onely Mathematical matters admit of this kind of evidence. Nor can it be proved *immediately* by *ſenſe*, becauſe *God* being ſuppoſed to be a pure ſpirit cannot be the object of any corporeal ſenſe. But yet we have as great aſſurance that there is a God as the nature of the thing to be proved is capable of; and as we could in reaſon expect to have ſuppoſing that he were. For let us ſuppoſe there were ſuch a *Being* as an *Infinite Spirit*, clothed with all poſſible perfection, *that is*, as *good* and *wiſe* and *powerfull*, &c. as can be imagined: what conceivable ways are there whereby we ſhould come to be aſſured that there is ſuch a *Being?* but either by an internal impreſſion of the notion of a God upon our minds; or elſe by ſuch external and viſible effects as our Reaſon tells us muſt be attributed to ſome cauſe, and which we cannot without great violence to our underſtandings attribute to any other cauſe but ſuch a *Being* as we conceive *God* to be, *that is*, one that is infinitely *good*, and *wiſe*, and *powerfull?* Now we have

have this double assurance that there is a God; and greater, or other than this the thing is not capable of: If God should assume a body and present himself before our eyes, this might amaze us but could not give us any rational assurance that there is an *Infinite Spirit*. If he should work a Miracle; this could not in reason convince an Atheist more than the arguments he already hath for it. If the Atheist then were to *ask a sign in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath*, what could he desire God to do for his conviction more than he hath already done? Could he desire him to work a greater Miracle than to make a world? Why, if God should carry this *perverse man* out of the limits of this world, and shew him a *new heaven* and a *new earth*, springing out of nothing, he might say that innumerable parts of matter chanc'd just then to rally together and to form themselves into this new world, and that God did not make it. Thus you see that we have all the rational assurance of a God that the thing is capable of, and that *atheism* is absurd and unreasonable in requiring more.

IV. The *Atheist* is unreasonable, because he pretends to know that which no man can know, and to be certain of that which

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no body can be certain of; that is, *that there is no God*, and which is conſequent upon this (as I ſhall ſhew afterwards) *that it is not poſſible there ſhould be one.* And the Atheiſt muſt pretend to know this certainly. For it were the greateſt folly in the world for a man to deny and deſpiſe God, if he be not certain that *He* is not. Now who ever pretends to be certain that there is no God hath this great diſadvantage, he pretends to be certain of a pure *Negative*. But of *negatives* we have far the leaſt certainty, and they are uſually hardeſt, and many times impoſſible to be proved. Indeed ſuch *negatives* as onely deny ſome particular mode or manner of a things exiſtence, a man may have a certainty of *them*; becauſe when we ſee things to be, we may ſee what they are, and in what manner they do or do not exiſt. *For inſtance*, we may be certain that man is not a creature that hath wings, becauſe this onely concerns the manner of his exiſtence; and we ſeeing what he Is, may certainly know that he is not ſo, or ſo. But *pure negatives*, that is, ſuch as abſolutely deny the exiſtence of things, or the poſſibility of their exiſtence, can never be proved. For after all that can be ſaid againſt a thing this will ſtill be true, that

many

many things poſſibly are which we know not of, and that many more things may be than are; and if ſo, after all our arguments againſt a thing it will be uncertain whether it be or not. And this is univerſally true, unleſs the thing denied to be do plainly imply a contradiction; from which I have already ſhewn the notion of a God to be free. Now the Atheiſt pretends to be certain of a *pure negative*, that there is no ſuch being as God, and that it is not poſſible there ſhould be: But no man can reaſonably pretend to know thus much, but he muſt pretend to know all things that are or can be; which if any man ſhould be ſo vain as to pretend to, yet it is to be hoped that no body would be ſo weak as to believe him.

V. *Speculative atheiſm* is unreaſonable, becauſe it contradicts it ſelf. There is this great contradiction in the denial of a God. He that denies a God, ſays that *that* is *impoſſible* which yet he muſt grant to be *poſſible*. He ſays it is *impoſſible* that there ſhould be ſuch a *Being* as God, in ſaying that *de facto* there is no ſuch *being*. For *eternity* being eſſential to the notion of a God, if there be not a God already it is impoſſible now that there ſhould be one; becauſe ſuch a being as is ſuppoſed to be eſſentially eternal

nal and without beginning cannot *now begin to be*. And yet he muſt grant it poſſible that there ſhould be ſuch a *being*, becauſe it is poſſible there ſhould be ſuch a *being* as hath all poſſible perfection: and ſuch a *being* as this is that which we call *God*, and is that very thing which the Atheiſt denies and others affirm to be. For he that denies a God, muſt deny ſuch a being as all the world deſcribe God to be; and this is the general notion which all men have of God, *that he is a being as perfect as is poſſible*; that is, endued with all ſuch perfections as do not imply a contradiction, which none of thoſe perfections which we attribute to God do, as I have already prov'd.

II. *Speculative atheiſm* as it is *unreaſonable*, ſo is it a moſt *imprudent* and uncomfortable opinion: And that upon theſe *two* accounts. *Firſt*, becauſe it is againſt the preſent intereſt and happineſs of mankind. *Secondly*, becauſe it is infinitely hazardous and unſafe in the iſſue.

1. It is againſt the preſent intereſt and happineſs of mankind. If *Atheiſm* were the general Opinion of the World, it would be infinitely prejudicial to the peace and happineſs of *humane Society*, and would open a wide door to all manner of confuſion and diſorder. But this I ſhall not now inſiſt

ſiſt upon, becauſe I deſign a particular Diſcourſe of *that* by it ſelf.

I ſhall at preſent content my ſelf to ſhew, how uncomfortable an opinion this would be to particular perſons. For nothing can be more evident than that *man* is not ſufficient of himſelf to his own happineſs. He is liable to many evils and miſeries which he can neither prevent nor redreſs. He is full of wants which he cannot ſupply, and compaſs'd about with infirmities which he cannot remove, and obnoxious to dangers which he can never ſufficiently provide againſt. Conſider *man* without the protection and conduct of a *ſuperior Being*, and he is ſecure of nothing that he enjoys in this world, and uncertain of every thing that he hopes for. He is apt to grieve for what he cannot help, and eagerly to deſire what he is never likely to obtain. *Man walketh in a vain ſhew, and diſquieteth himſelf in vain.* He courts happineſs in a thouſand ſhapes, and the faſter he purſues it the faſter it flies from him. His hopes and expectations are bigger than his enjoyments, and his fears and jealouſies more troubleſome than the evils themſelves which he is ſo much afraid of. He is liable to a great many inconveniences every moment of his life, and is continually in-

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ſecure not onely of the good things of this life but even of life it ſelf. And beſides all this, after all his endeavours to the contrary, he finds himſelf naturally to dread a *ſuperior Being* that can defeat all his deſigns, and diſappoint all his hopes, and make him miſerable beyond all his fears. He has oftentimes ſecret miſgivings concerning another life after this, and fearfull apprehenſions of an inviſible Judge, and thereupon he is full of anxiety concerning his condition in another world, and ſometimes plung'd into that anguiſh and deſpair that he grows weary of himſelf. So that the *Atheiſt* deprives himſelf of all the comfort that the apprehenſions of a God can give a man, and yet is liable to all the trouble and diſquiet of thoſe apprehenſions.

I do not ſay that theſe Inconveniences do happen to all; but every one is in danger of them. For man's nature is evidently ſo contriv'd as does plainly diſcover how unable he is to make himſelf happy. So that he muſt neceſſarily look abroad and ſeek for happineſs ſomewhere elſe. And if there be no *ſuperior Being*, in whoſe care of him he may repoſe his confidence and quiet his mind; If he have no comfortable expectations of another life to ſuſtain him under the evils and calamities he is liable

to

to in this world, he is certainly *of all creatures the most miserable.* There are none of us but may happen to fall into those circumstances of danger, or want, or pain, or some other sort of calamity, that we can have no hopes of relief or comfort but from *God* alone: none in all the world to flee to, but *Him.* And what would men do in such a case if it were not for *God?* Humane nature is most certainly liable to desperate exigencies, and he is not happy that is not provided against the worst that may happen. It is bad to be reduc'd to such a condition as to be destitute of all comfort. And yet men are many times brought to that extremity that if it were not for God they would not know what to do with themselves, or how to enjoy themselves for one hour, or to entertain their thoughts with any comfortable considerations under their present anguish and sufferings. All men naturally flye to God in extremity, and the most atheistical person in the world when he is forsaken of all hopes of any other relief is forc'd to acknowledge him and would be glad to have such a friend.

Can it then be a wise and reasonable design to endeavour to banish the belief of a God out of the world? Not to say how impious

impious it is in reſpect of God, nothing can be more malicious to men, and more effectually undermine the onely foundation of our happineſs. For if there were no God in the world man would be in a much more wretched and diſconſolate condition, than the creatures below him. For they are onely ſenſible of preſent pain, and when it is upon them they bear it as they can. But they are not at all apprehenſive of evils at a diſtance, nor tormented with the fearfull proſpect of what may befall them hereafter: nor are they plung'd into deſpair upon the conſideration that the evils they lye under are like to continue, and are incapable of a remedy. And as they have no apprehenſion of theſe things, ſo they need no comfort againſt them. But Mankind is liable to all the ſame evils, and many others; which are ſo much the greater, becauſe they are aggravated and ſet on by the reſtleſs workings of our minds, and exaſperated by the ſmart reflexions and frettings of our own thoughts: And if there be no God we are wholly without comfort under all theſe, and without any other remedy than what time will give. For if the providence of God be taken away, what ſecurity have we againſt thoſe innumerable dangers and miſchiefs

to which humane nature is continually expos'd? What consolation under them, when we are reduc'd to that condition that no creature can give us any hopes of relief? But if we believe that there is a God that takes care of us, and we be carefull to please him, this cannot but be a mighty comfort to us, both under the present sense of affliction and the apprehension of evils at a distance. For in that case, we are secure of one of these three things. Either that God by his providence will prevent the evils we fear, if that be best for us: Or that he will support us under them when they are present, and add to our strength as he encreaseth our burthen: Or that he will make them the occasion of a greater good to us, by turning them either to our advantage in this world, or the increase of our happiness in the next. Now every one of these considerations has a great deal of comfort in it, for which if there were no God there could be no ground. Nay, on the contrary, the most real foundation of our unhappiness would be laid in our Reason; and we should be so much more miserable than the beasts, by how much we have a quicker apprehension and a deeper consideration of things.

So that if a man had arguments sufficient

ent to perſwade him that there is no God (as there is infinite reaſon to the contrary) yet the belief of a God is ſo neceſſary to the comfort and happineſs of our lives, that a wiſe man could not but be heartily troubled to quit ſo pleaſant an error, and to part with a deluſion which is apt to yield ſuch unſpeakable ſatisfaction to the mind of man. Did but men conſider the true notion of God, he would appear to be ſo lovely a Being and ſo full of goodneſs and of all deſirable perfections, that even thoſe very perſons who are of ſuch irregular underſtandings as not to believe that there is a God, yet could not (if they underſtood themſelves) refrain from wiſhing with all their hearts that there were one. For is it not really deſirable to every man, that there ſhould be ſuch a *Being* in the world as takes care of the frame of it that it do not run into confuſion, and in that diſorder ruin mankind? That there ſhould be ſuch a Being, as takes particular care of every one of us, and loves us, and delights to do us good; as underſtands all our wants, and is able and willing to relieve us in our greateſt ſtraits, when nothing elſe can; to preſerve us in our greateſt dangers, to aſſiſt us againſt our worſt enemies, and to comfort us under our ſharpeſt ſufferings,

when all other things ſet themſelves a-gainſt us? Is it not every man's intereſt, that there ſhould be ſuch a Governour of the world as really deſigns our happineſs, and hath omitted nothing that is neceſſary to it; as would govern us for our advantage, and will require nothing of us but what is for our good, and yet will infinitely reward us for the doing of that which is beſt for our ſelves? that will puniſh any man that ſhould go about to injure us, or to deal otherwiſe with us than himſelf in the like caſe would be dealt withall by us? In a word, ſuch a one as is ready to be reconcil'd to us when we have offended him, and is ſo far from taking little advantages againſt us for every failing that he is willing to pardon our moſt wilfull miſcarriages upon our repentance and amendment? And we have reaſon to believe God to be ſuch a Being, if he be at all.

Why then ſhould any man be troubl'd that there is ſuch a Being as this, or think himſelf concern'd to ſhut him out of the world? How could ſuch a Governour as this be wanting in the world, that is ſo great a comfort and ſecurity to mankind and *the confidence of all the ends of the earth?* If God be ſuch a being as I have deſcrib'd, woe to the world if it were without

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out him. This would be a thouſand times greater loſs to mankind and of more diſmal conſequence, and if it were true ought to affect us with more grief and horrour than the extinguiſhing of the Sun.

Let but all things be well conſider'd, and I am very confident that if a wiſe and conſiderate man were left to himſelf and his own choice, to wiſh the greateſt good to himſelf he could deviſe; after he had ſearch'd heaven and earth, the *ſum* of all his wiſhes would be this, *that there were juſt ſuch a being as God is*; Nor would he chuſe any other benefactor, or friend, or protector for himſelf, or governour for the whole world, than infinite power conducted and managed by infinite wiſedom and goodneſs and juſtice, which is the true *notion* of a God.

Nay, ſo neceſſary is God to the happineſs of mankind, that though there were no God, yet the Atheiſt himſelf upon ſecond thoughts would judge it convenient that the generality of men ſhould believe that there is one. For when the Atheiſt had attain'd his end, and (if it were a thing poſſible) had blotted the notion of a God out of the minds of men, mankind would in all probability grow ſo melancholly and ſo unruly a thing, that *he himſelf* would think it fit in policy to contribute

his best endeavours to the restoring of men to their former belief. Thus hath God secur'd the belief of *himself* in the world, against all attempts to the contrary; not onely by rivetting the notion of himself into our natures, but likewise by making the belief of his being necessary to the peace and tranquillity of our minds, and to the quiet and happiness of humane Society.

So that if we consult our reason, we cannot but believe that there is; if our interest, we cannot but heartily wish that there were such a Being as God in the world. Every thing within us and without us gives notice of him. His name is written upon our hearts; and in every creature there are some prints and footsteps of him. Every moment we feel our dependance upon Him, and do by daily experience find that we can neither be happy without Him, nor think our selves so.

I confess, it is not a wicked man's interest, if he resolve to continue such, that there should be a God; but then it is not mens interest to be wicked. It is for the general good of humane Society, and consequently of particular persons, to be *true* and *just*; it is for mens health to be *temperate*; and so I could instance in all other

other vertues. But this is the myſtery of Atheiſm, men are wedded to their luſts and reſolv'd upon a wicked courſe; and ſo it becomes their intereſt to wiſh there were no God, and to believe ſo if they can. Whereas if men were minded to live righteouſly and ſoberly and vertuouſly in the world, *to believe a God* would be no hinderance or prejudice to any ſuch deſign; but very much for the advancement and furtherance of it. Men that are good and vertuous do eaſily believe a God; ſo that it is vehemently to be ſuſpected, that nothing but the ſtrength of mens luſts and the power of vicious inclinations do ſway their minds and ſet a *byaſs* upon their underſtandings toward Atheiſm.

2. Atheiſm is *imprudent*, becauſe *it is unſafe in the iſſue*. The Atheiſt contends againſt the religious man that there is no God; but upon ſtrange inequality and odds, for *he* ventures his eternal intereſt; whereas the Religious man ventures onely the loſs of his Luſts, (which it is much better for him to be without) or at the utmoſt of ſome temporal convenience; and all this while is inwardly more contented and happy, and uſually more healthfull, and perhaps meets with more reſpect and faithfuller friends, and lives in a more ſe-

cure and flouriſhing condition, and more free from the evils and puniſhments of this world, than the atheiſtical perſon does; however, it is not much that he ventures: And after this life, if there be no God, is as well as he; but if there be a God, is Infinitely better, even as much as unſpeakable and eternal happineſs is better than extream and endleſs miſery. So that if the arguments for and againſt a God were equal, and it were an even queſtion whether there were one or not; yet the hazard and danger is ſo infinitely unequal, that in point of prudence and intereſt every man were obliged to incline to the affirmative: and whatever doubts he might have about it, to chuſe the ſafeſt ſide of the queſtion, and to make that the principle to live by. For, he that acts wiſely and is a throughly prudent man, will be provided againſt all events, and will take care to ſecure the main chance whatever happens; but the Atheiſt, in caſe things ſhould fall out contrary to his belief and expectation, he hath made no proviſion for this caſe. If contrary to his confidence it ſhould prove in the iſſue that there is a God, the man is loſt and undone for ever. If the Atheiſt when he dies ſhould find that his ſoul remains

mains after his body and has onely quitted its lodging, how will this man be amazed and blank'd when contrary to his expectation he ſhall find himſelf in a new and ſtrange place, amidſt a world of ſpirits, entred upon an everlaſting and unchangeable ſtate? How ſadly will the man be diſappointed when he finds all things otherwiſe than he had ſtated and determined them in this world? When he comes to appear before that God whom he hath denied and againſt whom he hath ſpoken as deſpightfull things as he could, who can imagine the pale and guilty looks of this man and how he will ſhiver and tremble *for the fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majeſty?* How will he be ſurpriſed with terrors on every ſide, to find himſelf thus unexpectedly and irrecoverably plunged into a ſtate of ruin and deſperation? And thus things may happen for all this man's confidence now. For our belief or diſ-belief of a thing does not alter the nature of the thing. We cannot fanſie things into being or make them vaniſh into nothing by the ſtubborn confidence of our imaginations. Things are as ſullen as we are, and will be what they are whatever we think of them. And if there

there be a God a man cannot by an obſtinate disbelief of him make him ceaſe to be, any more than a man can put out the Sun by winking.

And thus I have as briefly and clearly as I could endeavoured to ſhew the *ignorance* and *folly* of *ſpeculative Atheiſm* in denying the *exiſtence of God*. And now it will be leſs needfull to ſpeak of the other *two Principles* of Religion, the *immortality of the ſoul*, and *future rewards*. For no man can have any reaſonable ſcruple about *theſe*, who believes that there is a God. Becauſe no man that owns the exiſtence of an *infinite ſpirit* can doubt of the poſſibility of a *finite ſpirit*, that is, ſuch a thing as is *immaterial* and does not contain any principle of *corruption* in it ſelf. And there is no man that believes the goodneſs of God, but muſt be inclin'd to think that he hath made ſome things for as long a duration as they are capable of. Nor can any man, that acknowledgeth the *holy* and *juſt* providence of God, and that he loves righteouſneſs and hates iniquity, and that he is a *Magiſtrate* and *Governour* of the World and conſequently concerned to countenance the obedience, and to puniſh the violation of his Laws; and that does withall conſider the promiſcuous diſpenſations

tions many times of God's Providence in this world? I ſay, no man that acknowledges all this, can think it unreaſonable to conclude, that after this life good men ſhall be rewarded, and ſinners puniſhed. I have done with the *firſt* ſort of irreligious perſons, the *ſpeculative Atheiſt*. I ſhall ſpeak but briefly of the other.

Secondly, The *practical Atheiſt*, who is wicked and irreligious, notwithſtanding he does in ſome ſort believe that there is a God, and a future ſtate; he is likewiſe guilty of prodigious folly. The *principle* of the *ſpeculative Atheiſt* argues more *ignorance*, but the *practice* of the *other* argues greater *folly*. Not to believe a God, and another life, for which there is ſo much evidence of reaſon is great ignorance and folly; but 'tis the higheſt madneſs when a man does believe theſe things to live as if he did not believe them: When a man does not doubt but that there is a God, and that according as he demeans himſelf towards him he will make him happy or miſerable for ever, yet to live ſo as if he were certain of the contrary, and as no man in reaſon can live but he that is well aſſured that there is no God. It was a ſhrewd ſaying of the old *Monk* that two kind of Priſons would ſerve for all offenders in the world,

world, an *Inquiſition* and a *Bedlam*: If any man ſhould deny the being of a God and the immortality of the ſoul, ſuch a one ſhould be put into the firſt of theſe the *Inquiſition*, as being a deſperate *Heretick*; but if any man ſhould profeſs to believe theſe things, and yet allow himſelf in any known wickedneſs, ſuch a one ſhould be put into *Bedlam*; becauſe there cannot be a greater folly and madneſs than for a man in matters of greateſt moment and concernment to act againſt his beſt reaſon and underſtanding, and by his life to contradict his belief. Such a man does periſh with his eyes open, and knowingly undoes himſelf; he runs upon the greateſt dangers which he clearly ſees to be before him, and precipitates himſelf into thoſe evils which he profeſſes to believe to be real and intolerable; and wilfully neglects the obtaining of that unſpeakable good and happineſs which he is perſwaded is certain and attainable. Thus much for the *ſecond* way of confirmation. †

III. The *third* way of confirmation ſhall be, by endeavouring to vindicate Religion from thoſe common *imputations* which ſeem to charge it with *ignorance* or *imprudence*. And they are chiefly theſe three:

1. *Credulity.*

2. *Singu-*

2. *Singularity.*

3. *Making a fooliſh Bargain.*

Firſt, Credulity: Say they, the foundation of Religion is the belief of thoſe things for which we have no ſufficient reaſon, and conſequently of which we can have no good aſſurance; as the belief of *a God*, and of *a future ſtate* after this life; things which we never ſaw, nor did experience, nor ever ſpoke with any body that did. Now it ſeems to argue too great a forwardneſs and eaſineſs of belief, to aſſent to any thing upon inſufficient grounds.

To this I anſwer,

1. That if there be ſuch a Being as a God, and ſuch a thing as a future ſtate after this life, it cannot (as I ſaid before) in reaſon be expected that we ſhould have the evidence of ſenſe for ſuch things: For he that believes a God, believes ſuch a Being as hath all perfections, among which this is one, that he is a ſpirit; and conſequently that he is inviſible, and cannot be ſeen. He likewiſe that believes another life after this profeſſeth to believe a ſtate of which in this life we have no trial and experience. Beſides, if this were a good objection, that no man ever ſaw theſe things, it ſtrikes at the Atheiſt as well as us. For no man ever ſaw the World to be from eterni-

ty;

ty; nor *Epicurus* his *Atoms*, of which notwithſtanding he believes the World was made.

2. We have the beſt evidence for theſe things which they are capable of at preſent, ſuppoſing they were.

3. Thoſe who deny theſe *principles*, muſt be much more credulous, that is, believe things upon incomparably leſs evidence of reaſon. The *Atheiſt* looks upon all that are religious as a company of credulous fools. But *he*, for his part, pretends to be wiſer than to believe any thing for company; he cannot entertain things upon thoſe ſlight grounds which move other men; if you would win his aſſent to any thing, you muſt give him a clear demonſtration for it. Now there's no way to deal with this *man of reaſon*, this rigid exactor of ſtrict demonſtration for things which are not capable of it, but by ſhewing him that he is an hundred times more credulous, that he begs more principles, takes more things for granted without offering to prove them, and aſſents to more ſtrange concluſions upon weaker grounds, than thoſe whom he ſo much accuſeth of credulity.

And to evidence this, I ſhall briefly give you an account of the Atheiſt's *Creed*, and preſent

preſent you with a Catalogue of the *fundamental Articles* of his Faith. *He believes* that there is no God, nor poſſibly can be, and conſequently that the wiſe as well as unwiſe of all ages have been miſtaken, except himſelf and a few more. *He* believes, that either all the World have been frighted with an apparition of their own fancy, or that they have moſt unnaturally conſpired together to cozen themſelves; or that this notion of a God is a trick of policy, though the greateſt Princes and Politicians do not at this day know ſo much, nor have done time out of mind. *He* believes, either that the Heavens and the Earth and all things in them had no Original cauſe of their being, or elſe that they were made by chance and happened he knows not how to be as they are; and that in this laſt ſhuffling of matter all things have by great good fortune fallen out as happily and as regularly as if the greateſt wiſedom had contrived them; but yet he is reſolv'd to believe that there was no wiſedom in the contrivance of them. He believes, that *matter* of it ſelf is utterly void of all *ſenſe*, *underſtanding* and *liberty*; but for all that he is of opinion that the parts of matter may know and then happen to be ſo conveniently diſpos'd, as to have all theſe qualities,

lities, and moſt dextrouſly to perform all thoſe *fine* and *free operations* which the ignorant attribute to Spirits.

This is the ſum of his belief. And it is a wonder, that there ſhould be found any perſon pretending to reaſon or wit that can aſſent to ſuch a heap of abſurdities, which are ſo groſs and palpable that they may be felt. So that if every man had his due it will certainly fall to the Atheiſt's ſhare to be the moſt credulous perſon, that is, to believe things upon the ſlighteſt reaſons. For he does not pretend to prove any thing of all this, onely he finds himſelf, he knows not why, enclin'd to believe ſo and to laugh at thoſe that do not.

II. The *ſecond imputation* is *ſingularity*; the affectation whereof is unbecoming a wiſe man. To this charge I anſwer.

I. If by *Religion* be meant the *belief* of the *principles* of Religion, that there is *a God*, and *a providence*, that *our ſouls are immortal*, and that there *are rewards* to be expected after this life; theſe are ſo far from being *ſingular* opinions, that they are and always have been the *general* opinion of mankind, even of the moſt *barbarous* Nations. Inſomuch, that the Hiſtories of ancient times do hardly furniſh us with the names of above five or ſix perſons who denied

nied a God. And *Lucretius* acknowledgeth that *Epicurus* was the firſt who did oppoſe thoſe great *foundations* of Religion, the *providence* of God, and the *immortality* of the ſoul. *Primum Grajus homo*, &c. meaning *Epicurus*.

2. If by *Religion* be meant a living up to thoſe principles, that is, to act conformably to our beſt reaſon and underſtanding, and to live as it does become thoſe who do believe a God and a future ſtate; this is acknowledged, even by thoſe who live otherwiſe, to be the part of every wiſe man; and the contrary to be the very *madneſs of folly*, and height of diſtraction: Nothing being more ordinary than for men who live wickedly to acknowledge that they ought to do otherwiſe.

3. Though according to the common courſe and practice of the world it be ſomewhat *ſingular* for men truly and throughly to live up to the principles of their *Religion*, yet *ſingularity* in this matter is ſo far from being a reflexion upon any man's prudence that it is a *ſingular* commendation of it. In two caſes *ſingularity* is very commendable.

1. When there is a neceſſity of it in order to a man's greateſt intereſt and happineſs. I think it to be a reaſonable account

for any man to give why he does not live as the greateſt part of the World do, that he has no mind to die as they do and to periſh with them; he is not diſpoſed to be a fool and to be miſerable for company, he has no inclination to have his laſt end like theirs *who know not God, and obey not the Goſpel of his Son, and ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*

2. It is very commendable to be *ſingular* in any *excellency*, and I have ſhewn that *Religion* is the greateſt *excellency*: to be *ſingular* in any thing that is wiſe, and worthy, and excellent, is not a diſparagement but a praiſe: every man would chuſe to be thus *ſingular.*

III. The *third imputation* is, that *Religion is a fooliſh bargain*; becauſe they who are religious hazard the parting with a preſent and certain happineſs for that which is future and uncertain. To this I anſwer.

1. Let it be granted, that the aſſurance which we have of future rewards falls ſhort of the evidence of ſenſe. For I doubt not, but that ſaying of our *Saviour*, *bleſſed is he who hath believed, and not ſeen*; and thoſe expreſſions of the *Apoſtle*, *we walk by faith and not by ſight*, and *faith is the evidence of things*

things not ſeen, are intended by way of abatement and diminution to the evidence of Faith, and do ſignifie that the report and teſtimony of others is not ſo great evidence as that of our own ſenſes: And though we have ſufficient aſſurance of another ſtate, yet no man can think we have ſo great evidence as if we our ſelves had been in the other world and ſeen how all things are there.

2. We have ſufficient aſſurance of theſe things, and ſuch as may beget in us a well grounded confidence and free us from all doubts of the contrary, and perſwade a reaſonable man to venture his greateſt intereſts in this world upon the ſecurity that he hath of another: For

1. We have as much aſſurance of theſe things as things future and at a diſtance are capable of, and he is a very unreaſonable man that would deſire more: Future and inviſible things are not capable of the evidence of ſenſe; but we have the greateſt rational evidence for them, and in this every reaſonable man ought to reſt ſatisfi'd.

2. We have as much as is abundantly ſufficient to juſtifie every man's diſcretion, who for the great and eternal things of another world hazards or parts with the poor and tranſitory things of this life. And

for the clearing of this it will be worth our considering, that the greatest affairs of this world and the most important concernments of this life are all conducted onely by *moral* demonstrations. Men every day venture their lives and estates onely upon *moral* assurance. For instance, men who never were at the *east* or *west Indies*, or in *Turky* or *Spain*, yet do venture their whole estate in traffick thither, though they have no *Mathematical demonstration* but onely *moral assurance* that there are such places. Nay which is more, men every day eat and drink, though I think no man can demonstrate out of *Euclide* or *Apollonius*, that his *Baker*, or *Brewer*, or *Cook* have not conveyed poison into his meat or drink. And that man that would be so wise and cautious as not to eat or drink till he could demonstrate this to himself, I know no other remedy for him but that in great gravity and wisedom he must die for fear of death. And for any man to urge that though men in temporal affairs proceed upon moral assurance, yet there is greater assurance required to make men seek Heaven and avoid Hell, seems to me to be highly unreasonable. For such an assurance of things as will make men circumspect and carefull to avoid a lesser danger ought in all

all reaſon to awaken men much more to the avoiding of a greater, ſuch an aſſurance as will ſharpen mens deſires and quicken their endeavours for the obtaining of a leſſer good ought in all reaſon to animate men more powerfully and to inſpire them with a greater vigour and induſtry in the purſuit of that which is infinitely greater. For why the ſame aſſurance ſhould not operate as well in a great danger as in a leſs, in a great good as in a ſmall and inconſiderable one, I can ſee no reaſon; unleſs men will ſay, that the greatneſs of an evil danger is an incouragement to men to run upon it, and that the greatneſs of any good and happineſs ought in reaſon to diſhearten men from the purſuit of it.

And now I think I may with reaſon entreat ſuch as are atheiſtically enclined to conſider theſe things ſeriouſly and impartially; and if there be weight in theſe conſiderations which I have offered to them to ſway with reaſonable men, I would beg of ſuch that they would not ſuffer themſelves to be byaſſed by prejudice or paſſion, or the intereſt of any luſt or worldly advantage, to a contrary perſwaſion.

Firſt, I would entreat them, ſeriouſly and diligently to conſider theſe things, becauſe they are of ſo great moment and con-

cernment to every man. If any thing in the world deſerve our ſerious ſtudy and conſideration, theſe principles of Religion do. For what can import us more to be ſatisfied in than whether there be a God, or not? whether our ſouls ſhall periſh with our bodies, or be immortal and ſhall continue for ever? And if ſo, whether in that eternal ſtate which remains for men after this life, they ſhall not be happy or miſerable for ever according as they have demeaned themſelves in this world?

If theſe things be ſo, they are of infinite conſequence to us; and therefore it highly concerns us to enquire diligently about them, and to ſatisfie our minds concerning them one way or other. For theſe are not matters to be ſlightly and ſuperficially thought upon, much leſs (as the way of atheiſtical men is) to be played and jeſted withall. There is no greater argument of a light and inconſiderate perſon, than prophanely to ſcoff at Religion. It is a ſign that that man hath no regard to himſelf, and that he is not touched with a ſenſe of his own intereſt, who loves to be jeſting with edg'd tools and to play with life and death. This is the very mad-man that *Solomon* ſpeaks of, *who caſteth fire-brands, arrows and death, and ſaith, am I not in ſport?*

Prov. 26. 18.

To

To examine ſeverely and debate ſeriouſly the principles of Religion, is a thing worthy of a wiſe man; but if any man ſhall turn Religion into raillery, and think to confute it by two or three bold jeſts, this man doth not render Religion but himſelf ridiculous, in the opinion of all conſiderate men; becauſe he ſports with his own life. If the principles of Religion were doubtfull and uncertain, yet they concern us ſo nearly that we ought to be ſerious in the examination of them. And though they were never ſo clear and evident, yet they may be made ridiculous by vain and frothy men; as the graveſt and wiſeſt perſon in the world may be abuſed by being put into a *fools coat*, and the moſt noble and excellent Poem may be debaſed and made vile by being turned into *burleſque*. But of this I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more largely in my next diſcourſe.

So that it concerns every man, that would not trifle away his ſoul and fool himſelf into irrecoverable miſery, with the greateſt ſerioufneſs to enquire into theſe matters whether they be ſo or not, and patiently to conſider the arguments which are brought for them. For many have miſcarried about theſe things, not becauſe there is not reaſon and evidence enough for

them, but becauſe they have not had patience enough to conſider them.

Secondly, conſider theſe things impartially. All wicked men are of a party againſt Religion. Some luſt or intereſt ingageth them againſt it. Hence it comes to paſs that they are apt to ſlight the ſtrongeſt arguments that can be brought for it, and to cry up very weak ones againſt it. Men do generally and without difficulty aſſent to *Mathematical* truths, becauſe it is no bodies intereſt to deny them; but men are ſlow to believe *moral* and *divine* Truths, becauſe by their luſts and intereſt they are prejudiced againſt them. And therefore you may obſerve that the more vertuouſly any man lives, and the leſs he is enſlaved to any luſt, the more ready he is to entertain the principles of Religion.

Therefore when you are examining theſe matters, do not take into conſideration any ſenſual or worldly intereſt, but deal clearly and impartially with your ſelves. Let not temporal and little advantages ſway you againſt a greater and more durable intereſt. Think thus with your ſelves, that you have not the making of things true or falſe, but that the truth and exiſtence of things is already fix'd and ſetled, and that the principles of Religion

are

are already either determinately true or falſe before you think of them, either there is a God, or there is not; either your Souls are Immortal, or they are not; one of theſe is certain and neceſſary, and is not now to be altered; the truth of things will not comply with our conceits, and bend it ſelf to our intereſts. Therefore do not think what you would have to be, but conſider impartially what is, and (if it be) will be whether you will or no. Do not reaſon thus; I would fain be wicked and therefore it is my intereſt that there ſhould be no God, nor no life after this; and therefore I will endeavour to prove that there is no ſuch thing, and will ſhew all the favour I can to that *ſide* of the *queſtion*; I will bend my underſtanding and wit to ſtrengthen the negative, and will ſtudy to make it as true as I can. This is fond, becauſe it is the way to cheat thy ſelf; and that we may do as often as we pleaſe, but the nature of things will not be impoſed upon. If then thou be as wiſe as thou oughteſt to be, thou wilt reaſon thus with thy ſelf; my higheſt intereſt is not to be deceived about theſe matters, therefore ſetting aſide all other conſiderations I will endeavour to know the truth and yield to that.

And now it is time to draw towards a conclu-

concluſion of this long diſcourſe. And that which I have all this while been endeavouring to convince men of and to perſwade them to, is no other but what God himſelf doth particularly recommend to us as proper for *humane* conſideration, *unto Man he ſaid, behold the fear of the Lord that is wiſedom, and to depart from evil is underſtanding.* Whoever pretends to reaſon, and calls himſelf a *man*, is oblig'd to acknowledge God and to demean himſelf religiouſly towards him. For God is to the underſtanding of man as the light of the Sun is to our eyes, the firſt and the plaineſt and the moſt glorious object of it. He fills heaven and earth, and every thing in them does repreſent him to us. Which way ſoever we turn our ſelves, we are encountered with clear evidences and ſenſible demonſtrations of a Deity. For (as the *Apoſtle* reaſons) *The inviſible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead:* εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους, *ſo that they are without excuſe*; that is, thoſe men that know not God have no apology to make for themſelves. Or if men do know and believe that there is ſuch a being as God, not to conſider the proper conſequences of

Rom. 1. 20.

ſuch

ſuch a principle, not to demean our ſelves towards him as becomes our relation to him and dependance upon him and the duty which we naturally owe him, this is great ſtupidity and inconſiderateneſs.

And yet he that conſiders the lives and actions of the greateſt part of men would verily think that they underſtood nothing of all this. Therefore the *Scripture* repreſents wicked men as without underſtanding. *It is a Nation void of counſel, neither is there any underſtanding in them*: Deut. 32. 28. and elſewhere, *have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge*; Pſal. 14. 4. Not that they are deſtitute of the natural faculty of underſtanding, but they do not uſe it as they ought; they are not blind but they wink, *they detain the truth of God in unrighteouſneſs*, and *though they know God yet they do not glorifie him as God*, nor ſuffer the apprehenſions of him to have a due influence upon their hearts and lives.

Men generally ſtand very much upon the credit and reputation of their underſtandings, and of all things in the world hate to be accounted fools, becauſe it is ſo great a reproach. The beſt way to avoid this imputation and to bring off the credit of our underſtandings is to be truly religious, *to fear the Lord and to depart from*

from evil. For certainly there is no ſuch imprudent perſon as he that neglects God and his ſoul, and is careleſs and ſlothfull about his everlaſting concernments; becauſe this man acts contrary to his trueſt reaſon and beſt intereſt; he neglects his own ſafety, and is active to procure his own ruine; he flies from happineſs and runs away from it as faſt as he can, but purſues miſery and makes haſte to be undone. Hence it is that *Solomon* does all along in the *Proverbs* give the title of *fool* to a wicked man, as if it were his proper name and the fitteſt character of him, becauſe he is ſo eminently ſuch: There is no fool to the ſinner, who every moment ventures his ſoul and lays his everlaſting intereſt at the ſtake. Every time a man provokes God he does the greateſt miſchief to himſelf that can be imagined. A mad man that cuts himſelf and tears his own fleſh and daſhes his head againſt the ſtones does not act ſo unreaſonably as he, becauſe he is not ſo ſenſible of what he does. Wickedneſs is a kind of *voluntary* frenzy and a *choſen* diſtraction, and every ſinner does wilder and more extravagant things than any man can do that is craz'd and out of his wits, onely with this ſad difference that he knows better what he does. For

to

to them who believe another life after this, an eternal ſtate of happineſs or miſery in another world, (which is but a reaſonable *poſtulatum* or demand among *Chriſtians*) there is nothing in *Mathematicks* more demonſtrable than the folly of wicked men; for it is not a clearer and more evident principle *that the whole is greater than a part*, than that eternity and the concernments of it are to be preferred before time.

I will therefore put the matter into a temporal Caſe, that wicked men who underſtand any thing of the rules and principles of worldly wiſedom may ſee the imprudence of an irreligious and ſinfull courſe, and be convinced *that this their way is their folly, even themſelves being judges.*

Is that man wiſe, as to his body and his health, who onely cloths his hands but leaves his whole body naked? who provides onely againſt the tooth-ach, and neglects whole troops of mortal diſeaſes that are ready to ruſh in upon him? Juſt thus does he who takes care onely for this vile body, but neglects his precious and immortal ſoul; who is very ſolicitous to prevent ſmall and temporal inconveniences, but takes no care to *eſcape the damnation of hell.*

Is

Is he a prudent man, as to his temporal eſtate, that lays deſigns only for a day, without any proſpect to, or proviſion for the remaining part of his life? even ſo does he that provides for the ſhort time of this life, but takes no care for all Eternity, which is to be wiſe for a moment but a fool for ever, and to act as untowardly and as groſly to the reaſon of things as can be imagined, to regard time as if it were eternity, and to neglect eternity as if it were but a ſhort time.

Do we count him a wiſe man, who is wiſe in any thing but in his own proper profeſſion and employment, wiſe for every body but himſelf; who is ingenious to contrive his own miſery and to do himſelf a miſchief, but is dull and ſtupid as to the deſigning of any real benefit and advantage to himſelf? Such a one is he, who is ingenious in his calling but a bad Chriſtian; for Chriſtianity is more our proper calling and profeſſion than the very trades we live upon: and ſuch is every ſinner, who is *wiſe to do evil, but to do good hath no underſtanding.*

Is it wiſedom in any man to neglect and diſoblige him who is his beſt friend, and can be his foreſt enemy? or with one weak troop to go out to meet him, that comes againſt him with thouſands of thouſands, to flie a ſmall danger and run upon a greater? Thus does

does every wicked man that neglects and contemns God, *who can ſave or deſtroy him*; who ſtrives with his *Maker and provoketh the Lord to jealouſie*, and with the ſmall and inconſiderable forces of a man takes the field againſt the *mighty God, the Lord of Hoſts*; who *fears them that can kill the body, but after that have no more that they can do; but fears not him, who after he hath kill'd, can deſtroy both body and ſoul in hell*; and thus does he who for fear of any thing in this World ventures to diſpleaſe God, for in ſo doing he runs away from men, and *falls into the hands of the living God*, he flies from a temporal danger and leaps into Hell.

Is not he an imprudent man, who in matters of greateſt moment and concernment neglects opportunities never to be retriev'd, who ſtanding upon the ſhore, and ſeeing the tide making haſte towards him apace, and that he hath but a few minutes to ſave himſelf, yet will lay himſelf to ſleep there till the cruel ſea ruſh in upon him and overwhelm him? And is he any better who trifles away this day of God's grace and patience, and fooliſhly adjourns the neceſſary work of repentance and the weighty buſineſs of Religion to a dying hour.

And to put an end to theſe queſtions,

Is

Is he wise who hopes to attain the End without the means, nay, by means that are quite contrary to it? such is every wicked man who hopes to be blessed hereafter without being holy here, and to be happy, that is, to find a pleasure in the enjoyment of God and in the company of holy spirits by rendring himself as unsuitable and unlike to them as he can.

Wouldst thou then be truly wise? Be wise for thy self, wise for thy soul, wise for eternity. Resolve upon a religious course of life. *Fear God and depart from evil.* Look beyond things present and sensible unto things which are not seen and are eternal, labour to secure the great interests of another world, and refer all the actions of this short and dying life to that state which will shortly begin but never have an end: and this will approve it self to be wisedom at the last, whatever the world judge of it now. For not that which is approved of men now, but what shall finally be approved by God is true wisedom; that which is esteemed so by him who is the fountain and original of all wisedom, the first rule and measure, the best and most competent judge of it.

I deny

I deny not but that thoſe that are wicked and neglect Religion may think themſelves wiſe, and may enjoy this their deluſion for a while: But there is a time a coming when the moſt prophane and atheiſtical, who now account it a piece of Gallantry and an argument of a great ſpirit and of a more than common wit and underſtanding to ſlight God and to baffle Religion and to level all the diſcourſes of another world with the Poetical deſcriptions of the Fairy-land; I ſay, there is a day a coming when all theſe witty fools ſhall be unhappily undeceived, and not being able to enjoy their deluſion any longer ſhall call themſelves fools for ever.

But why ſhould I uſe ſo much importunity to perſwade men to that which is ſo excellent, ſo uſefull, and ſo neceſſary? The thing it ſelf hath allurements in it beyond all arguments: For if Religion be the beſt knowledge and wiſedom I cannot offer any thing beyond this to your underſtandings to raiſe your eſteem of it, I can preſent nothing beyond this to your affections to excite your love and deſire. All that can be done is to ſet the thing before men, and to offer it to their choice; and if mens natural deſire of wiſedom and knowledge and happineſs will not per-

ſwade them to be religious, 'tis in vain to uſe arguments: if the ſight of theſe beauties will not charm mens affections, 'tis to no purpoſe to go about to compell a liking, and to urge and puſh forward a match to the making whereof conſent is neceſſary. Religion is matter of our freeſt choice, and if men will obſtinately and wilfully ſet themſelves againſt it there is no remedy. *Pertinaciæ nullum remedium poſuit Deus, God has provided no remedy for the obſtinacy of men*; but if they will chuſe to be fools and to be miſerable, he will leave them to inherit their own choice and to enjoy the portion of ſinners.

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2 PET. iii. 3.

Knowing this firſt, that there ſhall come in the laſt days ſcoffers, walking after their own luſts.

KNowing *this firſt.* In the *verſe* before, the *Apoſtle* was ſpeaking of a famous *prophecy* before the accompliſhment of which this ſort of men whom he calls *ſcoffers* ſhould come. *That ye may be mindfull of the words which were ſpoken before by the holy Prophets, and of the commandment of us the Apoſtles of our Lord and Saviour; Knowing this firſt, that there ſhall come in the laſt days ſcoffers,* &c.

The *prophecy* here ſpoken of is probably that famous prediction of the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* which is in the Prophet *Daniel*, and before the fulfilling whereof

Math. 24. 11. our Saviour expreſly tells us *falſe prophets ſhould ariſe and deceive many.*

Now the *ſcoffers* here ſpoken of are the *falſe teachers* whom the *Apoſtle* had been deſcribing all along in the foregoing *Chapter, there were falſe prophets alſo among the people, even as there ſhall be falſe teachers among you.* Theſe, he tells us, ſhould proceed to that height of impiety as to ſcoff at the principles of Religion and to deride the expectations of a future judgment, *In the laſt days ſhall come ſcoffers walking after their own luſts, and ſaying where is the promiſe of his coming?*

In ſpeaking to theſe words, I ſhall do theſe three things.

1. Conſider the nature of the ſin here mentioned, which is *ſcoffing* at Religion.

2. The character of the perſons that are charg'd with the guilt of this ſin, they are ſaid *to walk after their own luſts.*

3. I ſhall repreſent to you the heinouſneſs and the aggravations of this vice.

I. *Firſt*, we will conſider the nature of the ſin here mentioned, which is *ſcoffing* at Religion, *There ſhall come ſcoffers:* Theſe, it ſeems were a ſort of people that derided

ded our Saviour's prediction of his coming to judge the world. So the Apoſtle tells us in the next words, that they ſaid *where is the promiſe of his coming?*

In thoſe times there was a common perſwaſion among Chriſtians *that the day of the Lord was at hand*, as the *Apoſtle* elſewhere tells us. Now this, 'tis probable, theſe *ſcoffers* twitted the Chriſtians withall; and becauſe Chriſt did not come when ſome looked for him they concluded he would not come at all. Upon this they derided the Chriſtians as enduring perſecution in a vain expectation of that which was never likely to happen. They ſaw all things continue *as they were from the beginning of the world*, notwithſtanding the apprehenſions of Chriſtians concerning the approaching end of it; *For ſince the Fathers fell aſleep all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the world. Since the fathers fell aſleep,* ἀφ' ἧς, which may either be rendred *from the time*, or elſe (which ſeems more agreeable to the atheiſtical diſcourſe of theſe men) *ſaving* or *except that the fathers are fallen aſleep, all things continue as they were*; Saving that men die and one generation ſucceeds another, they ſaw no change or alteration. They looked upon all things as 2 Theſ. 3. 2.

going on in a constant course; One generation of men passed away and another came in the room of it, but the world remain'd still as it was. And thus for ought they knew things might hold on for ever. So that the principles of these men seem to be much the same with those of the *Epicureans*, who denied the providence of God and the immortality of mens souls; and consequently a future judgment which should sentence men to rewards and punishments in another world. These great and fundamental principles of all Religion they derided as the fancies and dreams of a company of melancholy men, who were weary of the world and pleased themselves with vain conceits of happiness and ease in another life. But as for them, they believed none of those things; and therefore gave all manner of licence and indulgence to their lusts.

But this belongs to the second thing I propounded to speak to, namely,

II. The character which is here given of these *scoffers*; They are said *to walk after their own lusts*. And no wonder if when they denied a future judgment they gave up themselves to all manner of sensuality.

St.

St. *Jude* in his *Epiſtle* gives much the ſame character of them that St. *Peter* here does, ver. 18, 19. *There ſhall come in the laſt days mockers, walking after their own ungodly luſts, ſenſual, not having the ſpirit.* So that we ſee what kind of perſons they are who prophanely ſcoff at Religion, men of ſenſual ſpirits and of licentious lives. For this character which the *Apoſtle* here gives of the *ſcoffers* of that age was not an accidental thing which happened to thoſe perſons, but is the conſtant character of them who deride Religion, and flows from the very temper and diſpoſition of thoſe who are guilty of this impiety; it is both the uſual preparation to it, and the natural conſequent of it.

To deride God and Religion is the higheſt kind of impiety. And men do not uſually arrive to this degree of wickedneſs at firſt, but they come to it by ſeveral ſteps. The *Pſalmiſt* very elegantly expreſſeth to us the ſeveral gradations by which men at laſt come to this horrid degree of impiety; *Bleſſed is the man, that walketh not in the counſel of the ungodly, nor ſtandeth in the way of ſinners, nor ſitteth in the ſeat of the ſcornfull.* Men are uſually firſt corrupted by bad counſel and company, which is called *walking in the* Pſal. 1. 1.

counsel of the ungodly; next they habituate themselves to their vicious practices, which is *standing in the way of sinners*, and then at last they take up and settle in a contempt of all Religion, which is called *sitting in the seat of the scornfull.*

For when men once indulge themselves in wicked courses, the vicious inclinations of their minds sway their understandings, and make them apt to disbelieve those truths which contradict their lusts. Every inordinate lust and passion is a false byas upon mens understandings which naturally draws toward Atheism. And when mens judgments are once byassed they do not believe according to the evidence of things, but according to their humour and their interest. For when men live as if there were no God it becomes expedient for them that there should be none: And then they endeavour to perswade themselves so, and will be glad to find arguments to fortifie themselves in this perswasion. Men of dissolute lives cry down Religion, because they would not be under the restraints of it; they are loth to be tied up by the strict laws and rules of it: 'Tis their interest more than any reason they have against it which makes them despise it, they hate it because they

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are reproved by it. So our Saviour tells us, that *men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil; for every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved.* John 3. 19, 20.

I remember it is the ſaying of *one*, who hath done more by his *Writings* to debauch the Age with Atheiſtical principles than any man that lives in it, *That when reaſon is againſt a man, then a man will be againſt reaſon.* I am ſure this is the true account of ſuch mens enmity to Religion, Religion is againſt them and therefore they ſet themſelves againſt Religion. The principles of Religion and the doctrines of the *holy Scriptures* are terrible enemies to wicked men, they are continually flying in their faces and galling their conſciences: And this is that which makes them kick againſt Religion and ſpurn at the doctrines of that *holy Book*. And this may probably be one reaſon why many men, who are obſerved to be ſufficiently dull in other matters, yet can talk prophanely and ſpeak againſt Religion with ſome kind of ſalt and ſmartneſs, becauſe Religion is the thing that frets them; and as in other things ſo in this *vexatio dat intellectum*, the inward trou-

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ble and vexation of their minds gives them ſome kind of wit and ſharpneſs in rallying upon Religion. Their conſciences are galled by it, and this makes them winch and fling as if they had ſome mettal. For, let men pretend what they will, there is no eaſe and comfort of mind to be had from atheiſtical principles. 'Tis found by experience, that none are more apprehenſive of danger or more fearfull of death than this ſort of men: Even when they are in proſperity they ever and anon feel many inward ſtings and laſhes, but when any great affliction or calamity overtakes them they are the moſt poor ſpirited creatures in the whole world.

The ſum is, the true reaſon why any man is an Atheiſt is becauſe he is a wicked man. Religion would curb him in his luſts, and therefore he caſts it off and puts all the ſcorn upon it he can. Beſides, that men think it ſome kind of apology for their vices that they do not act contrary to any principle they profeſs: Their practice is agreeable to what they pretend to believe, and ſo they think to vindicate themſelves and their own practices by laughing at thoſe for fools who believe any thing to the contrary.

III. The

III. The *third* thing I propounded was, to repreſent to you the heinouſneſs and the aggravations of this vice. And to make this out we will make theſe three ſuppoſitions, which are as many as the thing will bear.

1. Suppoſe there were no God, and that the principles of Religion were falſe.

2. Suppoſe the matter were doubtfull, and the arguments equal on both ſides.

3. Suppoſe it certain that there is a God, and that the principles of Religion are true. Put the caſe how we will, I ſhall ſhew that the humour is intolerable.

1. Suppoſe there were no God, and that the principles of Religion were falſe. Not that there is any reaſon for ſuch a ſuppoſition, but onely to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of this humour; Put the caſe that theſe men were in the right, in denying the principles of Religion, and that all that they pretend were true; yet ſo long as the generality of mankind believes the contrary, it is certainly a great rudeneſs, or incivility at leaſt, to deride and ſcoff at theſe things. Indeed upon this ſuppoſition there could be no ſuch thing as ſin, but yet it would be a great offence againſt

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the laws of civil converſation. Suppoſe then, the Atheiſt were wiſer than all the world, and that he did upon good grounds know that all mankind, beſides himſelf and two or three more, were miſtaken about the matters of Religion; yet if he were either ſo wiſe, or ſo civil as he ſhould be, he would keep all this to himſelf, and not affront other men about theſe things.

I remember that that *Law* which God gave to the people of *Iſrael*, *Thou ſhalt not ſpeak evil of the Rulers of thy people*; is rendred by *Joſephus* in a very different ſenſe: *What other Nations account Gods, let no man blaſpheme.* And this is not ſo different from the *Hebrew* as at firſt ſight one would imagine, for the ſame *Hebrew* word ſignifies both *Gods* and *Rulers*. But whether this be the meaning of that *Law* or not there is a great deal of reaſon in the thing. For though every man have a right in diſpute againſt a falſe Religion, and to urge it with all its abſurd and ridiculous conſequences, as the Ancient *Fathers* did in their diſputes with the *Heathen*; yet it is a barbarous incivility for any man ſcurrilouſly to make ſport with that which others account Religion, not with any deſign to convince their reaſon but onely to provoke their rage.

But

But now the Atheiſt can pretend no obligation of conſcience why he ſhould ſo much as diſpute againſt the principles of Religion, much leſs deride them. He that pretends to any Religion may pretend conſcience for oppoſing a contrary Religion: But he that denies all Religion, can pretend no conſcience for any thing. A man may be obliged indeed in reaſon and common humanity to free his neighbour from a hurtfull error; but ſuppoſing there were no God this notion of a Deity and the Principles of Religion have taken ſuch deep root in the mind of man that either they are not to be extinguiſhed, or if they be it would be no kindneſs to any man to endeavour it for him, becauſe it is not to be done but with ſo much trouble and violence that the remedy would be worſe than the diſeaſe.

For if this notion of a Deity be founded in a natural fear, it is in vain to attempt to expell it; for whatever violence may be offer'd to nature by endeavouring to reaſon men into a contrary perſwaſion, nature will ſtill recoil and at laſt return to it ſelf, and then the fear will be augmented from the apprehenſion of the dangerous conſequences of ſuch an impiety. So that nothing can create more trouble to a man than to endeavour to diſpoſſeſs him of this conceit,

conceit, becauſe nature is but irritated by the conteſt and the man's fears will be doubled upon him.

But if we ſuppoſe this apprehenſion of a Deity to have no foundation in nature, but to have had its riſe from tradition which hath been confirmed in the world by the prejudice of education, the difficulty of removing it will almoſt be as great as if it were natural, that which men take in by education being next to that which is natural. And if it could be extinguiſh't, yet the advantage of it will not recompence the trouble of the cure. For, except the avoiding of perſecution for Religion, there is no advantage that the principles of Atheiſm if they could be quietly ſetled in a man's mind can give him. The advantage indeed that men make of them is to give themſelves the liberty to do what they pleaſe, to be more ſenſual and more unjuſt than other men; that is, they have the privilege to ſurfeit themſelves and to be ſick oftner than other men, and to make mankind their enemy by their unjuſt and diſhoneſt actions, and conſequently to live more uneaſily in the world than other men.

So that the principles of Religion, the *belief of a God*, and *another life*, by obliging men to be vertuous do really pro-

mote

mote their temporal happineſs. And all the privilege that Atheiſm pretends to is to let men looſe to vice, which is naturally attended with temporal inconveniences. And if this be true, then the Atheiſt cannot pretend this Reaſon of charity to mankind (which is the onely one I can think of) to diſpute againſt Religion, much leſs to rally upon it. For it is plain, that it would be no kindneſs to any man to be undeceived in theſe principles of Religion, ſuppoſing they were falſe. Becauſe the principles of Religion are ſo far from hindring that they promote a man's happineſs even in this world, and as to the other world there can be no inconvenience in the miſtake, for when a man is not it will be no trouble to him that he was once deceived about theſe matters.

And where no obligation of conſcience nor of reaſon can be pretended, there certainly the laws of civility ought to take place. Now men do profeſs to believe that there is a God, and that the common principles of Religion are true, and to have a great veneration for theſe things. Can there then be a greater inſolence, than for a man when he comes into company to rally and fall foul upon thoſe things for which he knows the company have a reverence?

Can

Can one man offer a greater affront to another, than to expose to scorn him whom he owns and declares to be his best friend, the patron of his life, and the greatest benefactor he hath in the world? And doth not every man that owns a God say this of him?

But when the generality of Mankind are of the same opinion the rudeness is still the greater. So that whoever doth openly contemn God and Religion does *delinquere in majestatem populi & humani generis*, he does offend against the majesty of the People, and that reverence which is due to the common apprehensions of Mankind, whether they be true or not; which is the greatest incivility that can be imagin'd.

This is the first consideration, and it is the least that I have to urge in this matter. But yet I have insisted the longer upon it, because it is such a one as ought especially to prevail upon those who I am afraid are too often guilty of this vice, I mean those who are of better breeding, because they pretend to understand the laws of behaviour and the decencies of conversation better than other men.

2. Supposing it were doubtfull whether there be a God or not, and whether the Principles of Religion were true or not, and that the Arguments were equal on both

both Sides; yet it would be a great folly to deride theſe things. And here I ſuppoſe as much as the Atheiſt can with any colour of reaſon pretend to. For no man ever yet pretended to demonſtrate that there is no God, nor no life after this. For theſe being pure negatives are capable of no proof, unleſs a man could ſhew them to be plainly impoſſible. The utmoſt that is pretended is that the arguments that are brought for theſe things are not ſufficient to convince. But if they were onely probable, ſo long as no arguments are produced to the contrary that cannot in reaſon be denied to be a great advantage.

But I will for the preſent ſuppoſe the probabilities equal on both ſides. And upon this ſuppoſition I doubt not to make it appear to be a monſtrous folly to deride theſe things. Becauſe though the arguments on both ſides were equal, yet the danger and hazard is infinitely unequal.

If it prove true that there is no God the religious man may be as happy in this world as the atheiſt, nay the principles of Religion and Vertue do in their own nature tend to make him happier. Becauſe they give ſatisfaction to his mind, and his conſcience by this means is freed

from many fearfull girds and twinges which the Atheiſt feels. Beſides, that the practice of Religion and vertue doth naturally promote our temporal felicity. It is more for a man's health, and more for his reputation, and more for his advantage in all other worldly reſpects to lead a vertuous than a vitious courſe of life. And for the other world, if there be no God the caſe of the religious man and the Atheiſt will be alike, becauſe they will both be extinguiſht by death and inſenſible of any farther happineſs or miſery.

But then if the contrary opinion ſhould prove true, that there is a God; and that the ſouls of men are tranſmitted out of this world into the other, there to receive the juſt reward of their actions: Then it is plain to every man at firſt ſight, that the caſe of the religious man and the Atheiſt muſt be vaſtly different: Then, where ſhall the wicked, and the ungodly appear? And what think we ſhall be the portion of thoſe who have affronted God, and derided his word, and made a mock of every thing that is ſacred and religious? What can they expect but to be rejected by him whom they have renounced, and to feel the terrible effects of that power and juſtice which they have deſpiſed?

So

So that though the arguments on both ſides were equal, yet the danger is not ſo. On the one ſide there is none at all, but 'tis infinite on the other. And conſequently, it muſt be a monſtrous folly for any man to make a mock of thoſe things which he knows not whether they be or not; and if they be, of all things in the world they are no jeſting matters.

3. Suppoſe there be a God and that the principles of Religion are true, then is it not onely a heinous impiety but a perfect madneſs to ſcoff at theſe things. And that there is a God, and that the Principles of Religion are true, I have already in my former *diſcourſe* endeavoured to prove; both from the things which are made, and from the general conſent of mankind in theſe principles; of which univerſal conſent no ſufficient Reaſon can be given unleſs they were true. And ſuppoſing they are ſo, it is not onely the utmoſt pitch of impiety but the higheſt flight of folly that can be imagined to deride theſe things. To be diſobedient to the commands of God is a great contempt, but to deny his *Being*, and to make ſport with his *word*, and to endeavour to render it ridiculous by turning the wiſe and weighty ſayings of that *Holy Book* into raillery, is a moſt

direct affront to the God that is above. Thus the *Pſalmiſt* deſcribes theſe atheiſtical perſons as levelling their blaſphemies immediately againſt the majeſty of heaven. *They ſet their mouth againſt the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth*; they do miſchief among men, but the affront is immediately to God.

Beſides, that this prophane ſpirit is an argument of a moſt incorrigible temper. The *Wiſe man* every where ſpeaks of the *ſcorner* as one of the worſt ſort of ſinners and hardeſt to be reclaimed, becauſe he *deſpiſeth inſtruction* and mocks at all the means whereby he ſhould be reformed.

And then, is it not a moſt black and horrid ingratitude thus to uſe the Authour of our Beings and the Patron of our Lives; to make a ſcorn of him that made us, and to live in an open defiance of him *in whom we live, move, and have our beings*? But this is not all. As it is a moſt heinous ſo it is a moſt dangerous impiety, to deſpiſe him that can deſtroy us, and to oppoſe him who is infinitely more powerfull than we are. *Will ye* (ſays the Apoſtle) *provoke the Lord to jealouſie? are ye ſtronger than he?* What *Gamaliel* ſaid to the *Jews*, in another caſe, may with a little

little change be applied to this ſort of men; If there be a God, and the principles of Religion be true *ye cannot overthrow them, therefore refrain from ſpeaking againſt theſe* things *leſt ye be found fighters againſt God.*

I will but add one thing more to ſhew the folly of this prophane temper. And that is this, that as it is the greateſt of all other ſins ſo there is in truth the leaſt temptation to it. When the Devil tempts men with riches or honour to ruin themſelves he offers them ſome kind of conſideration, but the prophane perſon ſerves the Devil for naught and ſins onely for ſin's ſake, ſuffers himſelf to be tempted to the greateſt ſins and into the greateſt dangers for no other reward but the ſlender reputation of ſeeming to ſay that wittily which no wiſe man would ſay. And what a folly is this, for a man to offend his conſcience to pleaſe his humour, and onely for his jeſt to loſe two of the beſt Friends he hath in the world, God and his own ſoul?

I have done with the *three* things I propounded to ſpeak to upon this Argument, And now I beg your patience to apply what I have ſaid to theſe three purpoſes.

1. To take men off from this impious and dangerous folly of prophaneneſs which by ſome is miſcalled wit.

2. To caution men not to think the worſe of Religion becauſe ſome are ſo bold as to deſpiſe and to deride it.

3. To perſwade men to employ that reaſon and wit which God hath given them, to better and nobler purpoſes in the ſervice and to the glory of that God who hath beſtowed theſe gifts on men.

1. To take men off from this impious and dangerous folly. I know not how it comes to paſs that ſome men have the fortune to be eſteemed Wits onely for jeſting out of the common road, and for making bold to ſcoff at thoſe things which the greateſt part of mankind reverence. As if a man ſhould be accounted a Wit for reviling thoſe in Authority, which is no more an argument of any man's wit than it is of his diſcretion. A wiſe man would not ſpeak contemptuouſly of a great Prince though he were out of his Dominions, becauſe he remembers that Kings have long hands, and that their power and influence does many times reach a great way farther than their

their direct Authority. But God *is a great King, and in his hands are all the corners of the earth; we can go no whither from his Spirit, nor can we flee from his preſence;* where-ever we are *his eye ſees us* and *his right hand* can reach us. If men did truly conſult the intereſt either of their ſafety or reputation, they would never exerciſe thier wit in dangerous matters. Wit is a very commendable quality, but then a wiſe man ſhould always have the keeping of it. It is a ſharp weapon, as apt for miſchief as for good purpoſes if it be not well manag'd. The proper uſe of it is to ſeaſon converſation, to repreſent what is praiſeworthy to the greateſt advantage, and to expoſe the vices and follies of men, ſuch things as are in themſelves truly ridiculous: But if it be applied to the abuſe of the graveſt and moſt ſerious matters it then loſes its commendation. If any man think he abounds in this quality and hath wit to ſpare there is ſcope enough for it within the bounds of Religion and decency, and when it tranſgreſſeth theſe it degenerates into inſolence and impiety. All wit which borders upon prophaneneſs and makes bold with thoſe things to which the greateſt reverence is due deſerves to be branded for folly.

And if we would preſerve our ſelves from the infection of this vice we muſt take heed how we ſcoff at Religion, under any form, leſt inſenſibly we derive ſome contempt upon Religion it ſelf. And we muſt likewiſe take heed how we accuſtom our ſelves to a ſlight and irreverent uſe of the Name of God, and of the phraſes and expreſſions of the holy Bible which ought not to be applied upon every light occaſion. Men will eaſily ſlide into the higheſt degree of prophaneneſs who are not carefull to preſerve a due reverence of the great and glorious Name of God, and an awfull regard to the holy Scriptures. None ſo nearly diſpoſed to ſcoffing at Religion as thoſe who have accuſtomed themſelves to ſwear upon trifling occaſions. For it is juſt with God to permit thoſe who allow themſelves in one degree of prophaneſs to proceed to another, till at laſt they come to that height of impiety as to contemn all Religion.

2. Let no man think the worſe of Religion, becauſe ſome are ſo bold as to deſpiſe and deride it. For 'tis no diſparagement to any perſon or thing to be laught at, but to deſerve to be ſo. The moſt grave and ſerious matters in the whole world are liable to be abus'd. It is a known ſaying of

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Epictetus, that every thing hath two handles; By which he means, that there is nothing ſo bad but a man may lay hold of ſomething or other about it that will afford matter of excuſe and extenuation, nor nothing ſo excellent but a man may faſten upon ſomething or other belonging to it whereby to reduce it. A ſharp wit may find ſomething in the wiſeſt man whereby to expoſe him to the contempt of injudicious people. The graveſt book that ever was written may be made ridiculous by applying the ſayings of it to a fooliſh purpoſe. For a jeſt may be obtruded upon any thing. And therefore no man ought to have the leſs reverence for the principles of Religion, or for the holy Scriptures, becauſe idle and prophane Wits can break jeſts upon them. Nothing is ſo eaſie as to take particular phraſes and expreſſions out of the beſt Book in the world and to abuſe them by forcing an odd and ridiculous ſenſe upon them. But no wiſe man will think a good Book fooliſh for this reaſon, but the man that abuſes it; nor will he eſteem that to which every thing is liable to be a juſt exception againſt any thing. At this rate we muſt deſpiſe all things, but ſurely the better and the ſhorter way is to contemn thoſe who would

would bring any thing that is worthy into contempt.

3. And laſtly, to perſwade men to employ that reaſon and wit which God hath given them to better and nobler purpoſes, in the ſervice and to the glory of that God who hath beſtowed theſe gifts on men, as *Aholiab* and *Bezaleel* did their mechanical skill in the adorning and beautifying of God's Tabernacle. For this is the perfection of every thing, to attain its true and proper end; and the end of all thoſe gifts and endowments which God hath given us is to glorifie the giver.

Here is ſubject enough to exerciſe the wit of men and angels: To praiſe that infinite goodneſs, and almighty power, and exquiſite wiſedom which made us and all things; and to admire what we can never ſufficiently praiſe; To vindicate the wiſe and juſt providence of God, in the government of the world; and to endeavour, as well as we can upon an imperfect view of things, to make out the beauty and harmony of all the ſeeming diſcords and irregularities of the Divine adminiſtrations; To explain the oracles of the holy Scriptures, and to adore that great myſtery of Divine love (which the Angels, better and nobler creatures than

we are, deſire to pry into) God's ſending his onely Son into the world to ſave ſinners, and to give his life a ranſom for them. Theſe would be noble exerciſes indeed for the tongues and pens of the greateſt Wits. And ſubjects of this nature are the beſt trials of our ability in this kind. Satyr and invective are the eaſieſt kind of wit. Almoſt any degree of it will ſerve to abuſe and find fault. For wit is a keen inſtrument and every one can cut and gaſh with it, but to carve a beautifull image and to poliſh it requires great art and dexterity. To praiſe any thing well is an argument of much more wit, than to abuſe. A little wit and a great deal of ill nature will furniſh a man for Satyr, but the greateſt inſtance of wit is to commend well. And perhaps the beſt things are the hardeſt to be duly commended. For though there be a great deal of matter to work upon yet there is great judgment required to make choice, and where the ſubject is great and excellent it is hard not to ſink below the dignity of it.

This I ſay on purpoſe to recommend to men a nobler exerciſe for their wits, and if it be poſſible, to put them out of conceit with that ſcoffing humour which is ſo eaſie,

eaſie, and ſo ill natur'd, and is not onely an enemy to Religion but to every thing elſe that is wiſe and worthy. And I am very much miſtaken, if the State as well as the Church, the civil government as well as Religion, do not in a ſhort ſpace find the intolerable inconvenience of this humour.

But I confine my ſelf to the conſideration of Religion. And it is ſad indeed, that in a Nation profeſſing Chriſtianity ſo horrid an impiety ſhould dare to appear. But the Scripture hath foretold us that this ſort of men ſhould ariſe in the Goſpel-age, and they did appear even in the Apoſtles days. That which is more ſad and ſtrange is, that we ſhould perſiſt in this prophaneneſs notwithſtanding the terrible judgments of God which have been abroad in this Nation. God hath of late years manifeſted himſelf in a very dreadfull manner, as if it were on purpoſe to give a check to this inſolent impiety. And now that thoſe judgments have done no good upon us we may juſtly fear that he will appear once for all. And 'tis time for him to ſhew himſelf when his very Being is call'd in queſtion, and to come and judge the world when men begin to doubt whether he made it.

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The *Scripture* mentions two things as the fore-runners and reaſons of his coming to judgment, *infidelity*, and *prophane ſcoffing* at Religion. *When the Son of man comes, ſhall he find faith on the earth?* Luke 18. 8. And St. *Jude* out of an ancient prophecy of *Enoch* expreſly mentions this as one reaſon of the coming of the Lord, *to convince ungodly ſinners of all their hard ſpeeches which they had ſpoken againſt him.* Jude 15. ver.

And if theſe things be a ſign and reaſon of his coming, I wiſh that we in this Age had not too much cauſe to apprehend *the Judge to be at the door.* This impiety did fore-run the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* and the utter ruine of the Jewiſh Nation. And if it hold on amongſt us may not we have reaſon to fear that either *the end of all things is at hand*, or that ſome very diſmal calamity greater than any our eyes have yet ſeen does hang over us? But I would fain hope that God hath mercy ſtill for us, and that men will pity themſelves, and *repent, and give glory to God*, and *know in this their day the things that belong to their peace.* Which God of his infinite mercy grant for the ſake of Chriſt, To whom with the Father, *&c.*

PROV. xiv. 34.

Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation; but ſin is the reproach of any people.

ONE of the firſt principles that is planted in the nature of man, and which lies at the very root and foundation of his being is the deſire of his own preſervation and happineſs. Hence is it that every man is led by intereſt, and does love or hate, chuſe or refuſe things, according as he apprehends them to conduce to this end, or to contradict it. And becauſe the happineſs of this life is moſt preſent and ſenſible, therefore humane nature (which in this degenerate ſtate is extremely ſunk down into ſenſe) is moſt powerfully affected

fected with ſenſible and temporal things. And conſequently, there cannot be a greater prejudice raiſed againſt any thing than to have it repreſented as inconvenient and hurtfull to our temporal intereſts.

Upon this account it is, that Religion hath extremely ſuffer'd in the opinion of many as if it were oppoſite to our preſent welfare, and did rob men of the greateſt advantages and conveniences of life. So that he that would do right to Religion and make a ready way for the entertainment of it among men, cannot take a more effectual courſe than by reconciling it with the happineſs of mankind, and by giving ſatisfaction to our reaſon, that it is ſo far from being an enemy that it is the greateſt friend to our temporal intereſts; and that it doth not onely tend to make every man happy conſider'd ſingly and in a private capacity, but is excellently fitted for the benefit of humane ſociety.

How much Religion tends even to the temporal advantage of private perſons I ſhall not now conſider, becauſe my Text leads me to diſcourſe of the other, namely, to ſhew how advantageous Religion and Vertue are to the publick proſperity of a Nation, which I take to be the meaning of

of this *Aphoriſm* of *Solomon*, *Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation*, &c.

And here I ſhall not reſtrain *righteouſneſs* to the particular vertue of juſtice, (though in this ſenſe alſo this ſaying is moſt true) but enlarge it according to the *genius* and ſtrain of the Book of the *Proverbs*, in which the words *wiſedom* and *righteouſneſs* are commonly uſed very comprehenſively ſo as to ſignifie all Religion and Vertue. And that this word is ſo to be taken in the Text may appear farther from the oppoſition of it to ſin or vice in general; *Righteouſneſs* exalteth a Nation, but *Sin* is the reproach of any People.

You ſee then what will be the ſubject of my preſent diſcourſe; namely, that *Religion and Vertue are the great cauſes of publick happineſs and proſperity.*

And though the truth of this hath been univerſally acknowledged and long enough experienced in the world, yet becauſe the faſhion of the age is to call every thing into queſtion it will be requiſite to ſatisfie mens reaſon about it. To which end I ſhall do theſe two things.

1. Endeavour to give an account of this Truth.

2. To vindicate it from the pretences and insinuations of atheistical persons.

I. I shall give you this two-fold account of it.

1. From the justice of the Divine providence.

2. From the natural tendency of the thing.

1. From the justice of the Divine providence. Indeed, as to particular persons, the providences of God are many times promiscuously administred in this world; so that no man can certainly conclude God's love or hatred to any person by any thing that befalls him in this life. But God do's not deal thus with Nations. Because publick bodies and communities of men, as such, can onely be rewarded and punished in this world. For in the next, all those publick societies and combinations wherein men are now link'd together under several Governments, shall be dissolved. God will not then reward or punish Nations, as Nations; But every man shall then give an account of himself to God, and receive his own reward, and bear his own burthen. For although God account it's no dispargement to his justice

ſtice to let particular good men ſuffer in this world and paſs *through many tribulations into the kingdom of God*, becauſe there is another day a coming which will be a more proper ſeaſon of reward; yet in the uſual courſe of his providence he recompenſeth religious and vertuous Nations with temporal bleſſings and proſperity. For which reaſon St. *Auſtin* tells us that the mighty ſucceſs and long proſperity of the *Romans* was a reward given them by God for their eminent juſtice and temperance, and other vertues. And on the other hand, God many times ſuffers the moſt grievous ſins of particular perſons to go unpuniſhed in this world, becauſe he knows that his juſtice will have another and better opportunity to meet and reckon with them. But the general and crying ſins of a Nation cannot hope to eſcape publick judgments, unleſs they be prevented by a general repentance. God may defer his judgments for a time and give a People a longer ſpace of repentance, he may ſtay till the iniquities of a Nation be full, but ſooner or later they have reaſon to expect his vengeance. And uſually the longer puniſhment is delay'd it is the heavier when it comes.

Now all this is very reaſonable, becauſe

this world is the onely ſeaſon for National puniſhments. And indeed they are in a great degree neceſſary for the preſent vindication of the honour and majeſty of the Divine Laws, and to give ſome check to the overflowing of wickedneſs. Publick judgments are the banks and ſhores upon which God breaks the inſolency of ſinners and ſtays their proud waves. And though among men the multitude of offenders be many times a cauſe of impunity, becauſe of the weakneſs of humane Governments which are glad to ſpare where they are not ſtrong enough to puniſh, yet in the government of God, things are quite otherwiſe. No combination of ſinners is too hard for him, and the greater and more numerous the offenders are, the more his juſtice is concern'd to vindicate the affront. However God may paſs by ſingle ſinners in this world, yet when a Nation combines againſt him, *when hand joyns in hand the wicked ſhall not go unpuniſhed.*

This the *Scripture* declares to be the ſetled courſe of God's providence; That a righteous Nation ſhall be happy; *The work of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace; and the effects of righteouſneſs, quietneſs and aſſurance for ever.* And on the other hand, that

that he uſeth to ſhower down his judgments upon a wicked people, *he turneth a fruitfull land into barrenneſs for the wickedneſs of them that dwell therein.*

And the experience of all ages hath made this good. All along the Hiſtory of the *Old Teſtament*, we find the interchangeable providences of God towards the People of *Iſrael* always ſuited to their manners. They were conſtantly proſperous or afflicted according as piety and vertue flouriſhed or declined amongſt them. And God did not onely exerciſe this providence towards his own People, but he dealt thus alſo with other Nations. The *Roman Empire* whilſt the vertue of that people remained firm was *ſtrong as iron*, as 'tis repreſented in the Propheſie of *Daniel:* But upon the diſſolution of their manners the *iron* began *to be mixt with miry clay*, and the *feet* upon which that Empire ſtood, *to be broken.* And though God in the adminiſtration of his juſtice be not tied to precedents, and we cannot argue from Scripture-examples that the providences of God towards other Nations ſhall in all circumſtances be conformable to his dealings with the People of *Iſrael*; yet thus much may with great probability be collected from them, that

as God always bleſſed that People while they were obedient to him, and followed them with his judgments when they rebelled againſt him, ſo he will alſo deal with other Nations. Becauſe the reaſon of thoſe diſpenſations as to the main and ſubſtance of them ſeems to be perpetual, and founded in that which can never change, the juſtice of the Divine providence.

2*dly*. The truth of this farther appears, from the natural tendency of the thing. For Religion in general, and every particular vertue, doth in its own nature conduce to the publick Intereſt.

Religion, where-ever it is truly planted is certainly the greateſt obligation upon conſcience to all civil offices and moral duties. Chaſtity and temperance and induſtry do in their own nature tend to health and plenty. Truth and fidelity in all our dealings do create mutual love and good-will and confidence among men, which are the great bands of peace. And on the contrary, wickedneſs doth in its own nature produce many publick miſchiefs. For as ſins are link'd together and draw on one another, ſo almoſt every vice hath ſome temporal inconvenience annexed to it and naturally following

ing it. Intemperance and luſt breed infirmities and diſeaſes, which being propagated ſpoil the ſtrain of a Nation. Idleneſs and luxury bring forth poverty and want; and this tempts men to injuſtice, and that cauſeth enmity and animoſities, and theſe bring on *ſtrife* and *confuſion and every evil work*. This Philoſophical account of publick troubles and confuſions St. *James* gives us, *whence come wars and fightings among you? are they not hence, even from your luſts that war in your members?* Jam. 4. 1.

But I ſhall ſhew more particularly, that Religion and vertue do naturally tend to the good order and more eaſie government of humane Society, becauſe they have a good influence both upon Magiſtrates and Subjects.

1. Upon Magiſtrates. Religion teacheth them to rule over men in the fear of God, becauſe though they be Gods on earth yet they are ſubjects of Heaven, and accountable to Him who is higher than the higheſt in this world. Religion in a Magiſtrate ſtrengthens his authority, becauſe it procures veneration and gains a reputation to it. And in all the affairs of this world ſo much reputation is really ſo much power. We ſee that piety and Ver-

tue, where they are found among men of lower degree, will command ſome reverence and reſpect: But in perſons of eminent place and dignity they are ſeated to a great advantage, ſo as to caſt a luſtre upon their very Place and by a ſtrong reflexion to double the beams of Majeſty. Whereas impiety and vice do ſtrangely leſſen greatneſs, and do ſecretly and unavoidably derive ſome weakneſs upon authority it ſelf. Of this the *Scripture* gives us a remarkable inſtance in *David*. For among other things which made *the Sons of Zurviah too hard for him* this probably was none of the leaſt, that they were particularly conſcious to his crimes.

2. Religion hath a good influence upon the People; to make them obedient to Government, and peaceable one towards another.

1. To make them obedient to Government, and conformable to Laws; and that *not onely for wrath* and out of fear of the Magiſtrates power, which is but a weak and looſe principle of obedience, and will ceaſe when ever men can rebel with ſafety, and to advantage; but out *of Conſcience*, which is a firm, and conſtant and laſting principle, and will hold a man faſt when all other obligations will break. He that

that hath entertain'd the true principles of Chriſtianity is not to be tempted from his obedience and ſubjection by any worldly conſiderations, becauſe he believes that *whatſoever reſiſteth authority reſiſteth the ordinance of God*, and that *they who reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves damnation.*

2. Religion tends to make men peaceable one towards another. For it endeavours to plant all thoſe qualities and diſpoſitions in men which tend to peace and unity, and to fill men with a ſpirit of univerſal love and good will. It endeavours likewiſe to ſecure every man's intereſt by commanding the obſervation of that great rule of equity, *Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo to them*; by enjoyning that truth and fidelity be inviolably obſerved in all our words, promiſes and contracts. And in order hereunto it requires the extirpation of all thoſe paſſions and vices which render men unſociable and troubleſome to one another, as pride, covetouſneſs and injuſtice, hatred and revenge and cruelty; and thoſe likewiſe which are not ſo commonly reputed vices, as ſelf-conceit and peremptorineſs in a man's own opinion, and all peeviſhneſs, and incom-

incompliance of humour in things lawfull and indifferent.

And that theſe are the proper effects of true piety the doctrine of our Saviour and his Apoſtles every where teacheth us. Now if this be the deſign of Religion to bring us to this temper, thus to heal the natures of men and to ſweeten their ſpirits, to correct their paſſions and to mortifie all thoſe luſts which are the cauſes of enmity and diviſion, then it is evident that in its own nature it tends to the peace and happineſs of humane ſociety; and that if men would but live as Religion requires they ſhould do the world would be a quiet habitation, a moſt lovely and deſirable place in compariſon of what now it is. and indeed the true reaſon why the ſocieties of men are ſo full of tumult and diſorder, ſo troubleſome and tempeſtuous, is becauſe there is ſo little of true Religion among men; ſo that were it not for ſome ſmall remainders of piety and vertue which are yet left ſcatter'd among mankind, humane ſociety would in a ſhort ſpace disband and run into confuſion, the earth would grow wild and become a great foreſt, and mankind would become beaſts of prey one towards another. And if this diſcourſe

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hold true ſurely then one would think that vertue ſhould find it ſelf a ſeat where-ever humane ſocieties are, and that Religion ſhould be owned and encouraged in the world until men ceaſe to be governed by reaſon.

II. I come to vindicate this truth from the inſinuations and pretences of atheiſtical perſons. I ſhall mention two.

1. That Government may ſubſiſt well enough without the belief of a God and a ſtate of rewards and puniſhments after this life.

2. That as for vertue and vice they are arbitrary things.

1. That Government may ſubſiſt well enough without the belief of a God or a ſtate of rewards and puniſhments after this life. And this the Atheiſt does and muſt aſſert, otherwiſe he is by his own confeſſion a declared enemy to Government and unfit to live in humane ſociety.

For anſwer to this, I will not deny but that though the generality of men did not believe any ſuperior Being nor any rewards and puniſhments after this life, yet notwithſtanding this there might be ſome kind of Government kept up in the world.

world. For ſuppoſing men to have reaſon, the neceſſities of humane nature and the miſchiefs of confuſion would probably compel them into ſome kind of order. But then I ſay withall, that if theſe principles were baniſhed out of the world Government would be far more difficult than now it is, becauſe it would want its firmeſt Baſis and foundation; there would be infinitely more diſorders in the world if men were reſtrained from injuſtice and violence onely by humane laws, and not by principles of conſcience and the dread of another world. Therefore Magiſtrates have always thought themſelves concerned to cheriſh Religion, and to maintain in the minds of men the belief of a God and another life. Nay that common ſuggeſtion of atheiſtical perſons, that Religion was at firſt a politick device and is ſtill kept up in the world as a State-engine to awe men into obedience, is a clear acknowledgment of the uſefulneſs of it to the ends of Government, and does as fully contradict that pretence of theirs which I am now confuting as any thing that can be ſaid.

2. That vertue and vice are arbitrary things founded onely in the imaginations of men and in the conſtitutions and cuſtoms

cuſtoms of the world, but not in the nature of the things themſelves; and that *that* is vertue or vice, good or evil, which the Supream Authority of a Nation declares to be ſo. And this is frequently and confidently aſſerted by the ingenious Authour of a very bad Book, I mean the *Leviathan.*

Now the proper way of anſwering any thing that is confidently aſſerted is to ſhew the contrary, namely, That there are ſome things that have a natural evil and deformity in them, as perjury, perfidiouſneſs, unrighteouſneſs and ingratitude, which are things not onely condemned by the poſitive laws and conſtitutions of particular Nations and Governments but by the general verdict of humane nature: And that the vertues contrary to theſe have a natural goodneſs and comlineſs in them, and are ſuitable to the common principles and ſentiments of humanity.

And this will moſt evidently appear by putting this ſuppoſition. Suppoſe the reverſe of all that which we now call vertue were ſolemnly enacted, and the practice of fraud, and rapine, and perjury, and falſeneſs to a man's word, and all manner of vice and wickedneſs were eſta-

eſtabliſhed by a Law. I ask now, if the caſe between vertue and vice were thus alter'd, would that which we now call vice in proceſs of time gain the reputation of vertue, and that which we now call vertue grow odious and contemptible to humane nature? If it would not, then is there ſomething in the nature of good and evil, of vertue and vice, which does not depend upon the pleaſure of Authority, nor is ſubject to any arbitrary Conſtitution. But that it would not be thus I am very certain, becauſe no Government could ſubſiſt upon theſe terms. For the very enjoyning of fraud and rapine and perjury and breach of truſt doth apparently deſtroy the greateſt end of Government, which is to preſerve men in their rights againſt the encroachments of fraud and violence. And this end being deſtroyed humane ſocieties would preſently fly in pieces and men would neceſſarily fall into a ſtate of war. Which plainly ſhews that vertue and vice are not arbitrary things, but that there is a natural and immutable and eternal reaſon for that which we call goodneſs and vertue, and againſt that which we call vice and wickedneſs.

Thus I have endeavoured to evidence

and

and vindicate this truth. I ſhall onely draw an Inference or two from this diſcourſe, and ſo conclude.

1. If this diſcourſe be true, then thoſe who are in place of power and authority are peculiarly concerned to maintain the honour of Religion.

2. It concerns every one to live in the practice of it.

1. Magiſtrates are concerned to maintain the honour of Religion, which doth not onely tend to every man's future happineſs, but is the beſt inſtrument of Civil Government and of the temporal proſperity of a Nation. For the whole deſign of it is to procure the private and publick happineſs of mankind, and to reſtrain men from all thoſe things which would make them miſerable and guilty to themſelves, unpeaceable and troubleſome to the world. Religion hath ſo great an influence upon the felicity of men that it ought to be upheld, and the veneration of it maintained, not onely out of a juſt dread of the Divine vengeance in another world, but out of a regard to the temporal peace and proſperity of men. It will requite all the kindneſs and ho-

honour we can do it by the advantages it will bring to Civil Government, and by the bleſſings it will draw down upon it. God hath promiſed that *thoſe that honour him, he will honour*, and in the common courſe of his providence he uſually makes this good, ſo that the civil Authority ought to be very tender of the honour of God and Religion, if for no other reaſon yet out of *reaſon of State.*

It were to be wiſht that all men were ſo piouſly diſpoſed, that Religion by its own authority and the reaſonable force of it might be ſufficient to eſtabliſh its Empire in the minds of men. But the corruptions of men will always make a ſtrong oppoſition againſt it. And therefore at the firſt planting of the Chriſtian Religion in the world God was pleaſed to accompany it with a miraculous power: But after it was planted this extraordinary power ceaſed, and God hath now left it to be maintained and ſupported by more ordinary and humane ways, by the countenance of Authority, and the aſſiſtance of Laws; which were never more neceſſary than in this degenerate age, which is prodigiouſly ſunk into Atheiſm and prophaneneſs, and is running head-long into an humour of ſcoffing at God and Religion

ligion and every thing that is ſacred. For ſome ages before the Reformation Atheiſm was confined to *Italy*, and had its chief reſidence at *Rome*. All the mention that is of it in the Hiſtory of thoſe times the Papiſts themſelves give us in the Lives of their own Popes and Cardinals, excepting two or three ſmall Philoſophers that were retainers to that Court. So that this Atheiſtical humour among Chriſtians was the ſpawn of the groſs ſuperſtitious and corrupt manners of the Romiſh Church and Court. And indeed nothing is more natural than for extremes in Religion to beget one another, like the vibrations of a *pendulum* which the more violently you ſwing it one way the farther it will return the other. But in the laſt age, Atheiſm travel'd over the *Alpes* and infected *France*, and now of late it hath croſſed the Seas and invaded our Nation and hath prevailed to amazement: For I do not think that there are any people in the World that are generally more indiſpoſed to it and can worſe brook it, ſeriouſneſs and zeal in Religion being almoſt the natural temper of the *Engliſh*. So that nothing is to me matter of greater wonder, than that in a grave and ſober Nation prophaneneſs ſhould ever come

to gain ſo much ground, and the beſt and the wiſeſt Religion in the world to be made the ſcorn of fools. For beſides the prophane and atheiſtical diſcourſes about God and Religion, and the bold and ſenſleſs abuſes of this *ſacred Book* the great inſtruments of our ſalvation, which are ſo frequent in the publick places of reſort; I ſay, beſides theſe (I ſpeak it knowingly) a man can hardly paſs the ſtreets without having his ears grated and pierced with ſuch horrid and blaſphemous oaths and curſes as are enough, if we were guilty of no other ſin, to ſink a Nation. And this not onely from the *Tribe* that wear Liveries, but from thoſe that go before them and ſhould give better example. Is it not then high time that the Laws ſhould provide by the moſt prudent and effectual means to curb theſe bold and inſolent defiers of Heaven, who take a pride in being monſters, and boaſt themſelves in the follies and deformities of humane nature? The Heathens would never ſuffer their Gods to be reviled, which yet were no Gods. And ſhall it among the profeſſors of the true Religion, be allowed to any man to make a mock of Him that made Heaven and Earth, and to breath out blaſphemies againſt Him

Him who gives us life and breath and all things? I doubt not but hypocriſie is a great wickedneſs and very odious to God, but by no means of ſo pernicious example as open prophaneneſs. Hypocriſie is a more modeſt way of ſinning, it ſhews ſome reverence to Religion, and does ſo far own the worth and excellency of it as to acknowledge that it deſerves to be counterfeited: Whereas prophaneneſs declares openly againſt it, and endeavours to make a party to drive it out of the world.

2. It concerns every one to live in the practice of Religion and Vertue; Becauſe the publick happineſs and proſperity depends upon it. It is moſt apparent that of late years Religion is very ſenſibly declin'd among us. The manners of men have almoſt been univerſally corrupted by a Civil War. We ſhould therefore all jointly endeavour to retrieve the ancient vertue of the Nation, and to bring into faſhion again that ſolid and ſubſtantial, that plain und unaffected piety, (free from the extreams both of ſuperſtition and enthuſiaſm) which flouriſhed in the age of our immediate Forefathers. Which did not conſiſt in idle talk but in real effects, in a ſincere love of God and of our neighbour,

in a pious devotion and reverence towards the Divine Majeſty, and in the vertuous actions of a good life; in the denial of *ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*, and *in living ſoberly and righteouſly and godly in this preſent world.* This were the true way to reconcile God to us, to ſtop the courſe of his judgments, and to bring down the bleſſings of Heaven upon us.

God hath now been pleaſed to ſettle us again in peace both at home and abroad, and he hath put us once more into the hands of our own counſel. Life and Death, bleſſing and curſing, proſperity and deſtruction are before us. We may chuſe our own fortune, and if we be not wanting to our ſelves we may under the influences of God's grace and aſſiſtance, which is never wanting to our ſincere endeavours, become a happy and a proſperous People.

The good God make us all wiſe to know and to do the things that belong to the temporal peace and proſperity of the Nation, and to the eternal happineſs and ſalvation of every one of our ſouls; which we humbly beg for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, to whom, &c.

PSALM

PSALM xix. 11.

And in keeping of them there is great reward.

IN this *Pſalm David* celebrates the glory of God from the conſideration of the greatneſs of his Works, and the perfection of his Laws. From the greatneſs of his Works, *verſe* 1. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſheweth his handy-work*, &c. From the perfection of his Laws, *verſe* 7. *The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the ſoul*, &c. And among many other excellencies of the Divine Laws, he mentions in the laſt place the benefits and advantages which come from the obſervance of them, *verſe* 11. *and in keeping of them there is great reward.*

I have already ſhown how much Reli-

gion tends to the publick welfare of mankind; to the ſupport of Government, and to the peace and happineſs of humane Societies. My work at this time ſhall be to ſhew that Religion and obedience to the Laws of God do likewiſe conduce to the happineſs of particular perſons, both in reſpect of this world and the other. For though there be but little expreſs mention made in the *Old Teſtament* of the immortality of the Soul and the rewards of another life, yet all Religion does ſuppoſe theſe principles, and is built upon them.

I. And *Firſt*, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew how Religion conduceth to the happineſs of this life; and that both in reſpect of the inward and outward man.

Firſt, as to the mind; to be pious and religious brings a double advantage to the mind of man. 1. It tends to the improvement of our underſtandings. 2. It brings peace and pleaſure to our minds.

1. It tends to the improvement of our underſtandings. I do not mean onely that it inſtructs us in the knowledge of divine and ſpiritual things, and makes us to underſtand the great intereſt of our ſouls and the concernments of eternity better, but that in general it does raiſe and enlarge the minds

minds of men and make them more capable of true knowledge. And in this ſenſe I underſtand the following Texts; *The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightning the eyes;* Pſal. 19.8. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſedom, a good underſtanding have all they that keep his commandments;* Pſal. 111. 10. *Thou through thy commandments haſt made me wiſer than mine enemies,* which Pſal. 119. 98. plainly refers to political prudence; *I have more underſtanding than all my teachers, for thy Teſtimonies are my meditation; I underſtand more than the ancients, becauſe I keep thy precepts;* ver. 99. *Through thy precepts I get underſtanding;* ver. 104. *The entrance of thy word giveth light, it giveth underſtanding to the ſimple.* ver. 130.

Now Religion doth improve the underſtandings of men by ſubduing their luſts, and moderating their paſſions. The luſts and paſſions of men do fully and darken their minds, even by a natural influence. Intemperance and ſenſuality and fleſhly luſts do debaſe mens minds, and clog their ſpirits, make them groſs and foul, liſtleſs and unactive; they ſink us down into ſenſe, and glew us to theſe low and inferiour things; like *birdlime* they hamper and entangle our ſouls, and hinder their flight upwards; they indiſpoſe and unfit our

minds for the moſt noble and intellectual conſiderations. So likewiſe the exorbitant paſſions of wrath and malice, envy and revenge, do darken and diſtort the underſtandings of men, do tincture the mind with falſe colours and fill it with prejudice and undue apprehenſions of things.

There is no man that is intemperate or luſtfull, or paſſionate but beſides the guilt he contracts which is continually fretting and diſquieting his mind, beſides the inconveniences he brings upon himſelf as to his health, he does likewiſe ſtain and obſcure the brightneſs of his Soul and the clearneſs of his diſcerning faculty. Such perſons have not that free uſe of their reaſon that they might have; their underſtandings are not bright enough, nor their ſpirits pure and fine enough for the exerciſe of the higheſt and nobleſt acts of reaſon. What clearneſs is to the eye that purity is to our mind and underſtanding, and as the clearneſs of the bodily eye doth diſpoſe it for a quicker ſight of material objects, ſo doth the purity of our minds, that is, freedom from luſt and paſſion, diſpoſe us for the cleareſt and moſt perfect acts of reaſon and underſtanding.

Now Religion doth purifie our minds and refine our ſpirits by quenching the fire

fire of luſt and ſuppreſſing the fumes and vapours of it, and by ſcattering the clouds and miſts of paſſion. And the more any man's ſoul is cleanſed from the filth and dregs of ſenſual luſts the more nimble and expedite it will be in its operations. The more any man conquers his paſſions, the more calm and ſedate his ſpirit is, and the greater equality he maintains in his temper, his apprehenſions of things will be the more clear and unprejudic'd, and his judgment more firm and ſteddy. And this is the meaning of that ſaying of *Solomon*, *He that is ſlow to wrath is of great underſtanding, but he that is haſty of ſpirit exalteth folly. Ira furor brevis eſt* ----- Anger is a ſhort fit of madneſs, and he that is paſſionate and furious deprives himſelf of his reaſon, ſpoils his underſtanding, and helps to make himſelf a fool: whereas he that conquers his paſſions and keeps them under, doth thereby preſerve and improve his underſtanding. Freedom from irregular paſſions doth not onely ſignifie that a man is wiſe, but really contributes to the making of him ſuch.

2. Religion tends to the eaſe and pleaſure, the peace and tranquillity of our minds; wherein happineſs chiefly conſiſts and which all the wiſedom and Philoſophy of

of the world did always aim at, as the ut-
moſt felicity of this life. And that this is the
natural fruit of a religious and vertuous
courſe of life, the Scripture declares to us
Pſal. 97. 11. in theſe Texts; *Light is ſown for the righ-*
teous, and gladneſs for the upright in heart;
Pſal. 119. 165. *Great peace have all they that love thy*
Law, and nothing ſhall offend them; Prov. 3. 17. *Her ways*
are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths
Iſa. 32. 17. *are peace; The fruit of righteouſneſs is peace,*
and the effect of righteouſneſs quietneſs and
aſſurance for ever; The plain ſenſe of
which Texts is that pleaſure and peace
do naturally reſult from a holy and good
life. When a man hath once engag'd him-
ſelf in a Religious courſe, and is habitu-
ted to piety and holineſs, all the exerciſes
of Religion and devotion, all acts of good-
neſs and vertue are delightfull to him. To
honour and worſhip God, to pray to him
and to praiſe him, to ſtudy his will, to me-
ditate upon him and to love him, all theſe
bring great pleaſure and peace along with
them. What greater contentment and ſa-
tisfaction can there be to the mind of
man, when it is once purifi'd and refin'd
from the dregs of ſenſual pleaſures and
delights, and rais'd to its true height and
pitch, than to contemplate and admire
the infinite excellencies and perfections of
God

God, to adore his greatneſs and to love his goodneſs? How can the thoughts of God be troubleſome to any one who lives ſoberly and righteouſly and godly in the world? No man that loves goodneſs and righteouſneſs hath any reaſon to be afraid of God, or to be diſquieted with the thoughts of him. There is nothing in God that is terrible to a good man; but all the apprehenſions which we naturally have of him ſpeak comfort and promiſe happineſs to ſuch a one. The conſideration of his attributes is ſo far from being a trouble to him that it is his recreation and delight. It is for wicked men to dread God, and to endeavour to baniſh the thoughts of him out of their minds; but a holy and vertuous man may have quiet and undiſturb'd thoughts even of the juſtice of God, becauſe the terrour of it doth not concern him.

Now Religion doth contribute to the peace and quiet of our minds theſe two ways. *Firſt*, By allaying thoſe paſſions which are apt to ruffle and diſcompoſe our ſpirits. Malice and hatred, wrath and revenge are very fretting and vexatious and apt to make our minds ſore and uneaſie; but he that can moderate theſe affections will find a ſtrange eaſe and pleaſure in

in his own ſpirit. *Secondly*, by freeing us from the anxieties of guilt, and the fears of divine wrath and diſpleaſure; than which nothing is more ſtinging and tormenting and renders the life of man more miſerable and unquiet. And what a ſpring of peace and joy muſt it needs be to apprehend upon good grounds that God is reconcil'd to us and become our friend; that all our ſins are perfectly forgiven and ſhall never more be remembred againſt us! What unexpreſſible comfort does overflow the pious and devout ſoul from the remembrance of a holy and well-ſpent life and a conſcience of its own innocency and integrity! And nothing but the practice of Religion and Vertue can give this eaſe and ſatisfaction to the mind of man. For there is a certain kind of temper and diſpoſition which is neceſſary to the pleaſure and quiet of our minds, and conſequently to our happineſs: and that is holineſs and goodneſs, which as it is the perfection ſo is it likewiſe the happineſs of the Divine nature: And on the contrary, the chief part of the miſery of wicked men, and of thoſe accurſed ſpirits the Devils is this, that they are of a diſpoſition contrary to God; they are envious and malicious and cruel, and of ſuch a temper as

is

is naturally a torment and diſquiet to it ſelf. And here the foundation of Hell is laid, in the evil diſpoſition of mens minds; and till this be cur'd, which can onely be done by Religion, it is as impoſſible for a man to be happy, that is, pleas'd and contented within himſelf, as it is for a ſick man to be at eaſe. Becauſe ſuch a man hath that within him which torments him, and he cannot be at eaſe till that be remov'd. The man's ſpirit is out of order and off the hinges, and till that be put into its right frame he will be perpetually diſquieted and can find no reſt within himſelf. The *Prophet* very fitly deſcribes to us the unquiet condition of wicked men, *The wicked is like the troubled ſea when it cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt; there is no peace (ſaith my God) to the wicked.* So long as ſin and corruption abound in our hearts they will be reſtleſly working, like wine which will be in a perpetual motion and agitation till it have purg'd it ſelf of its dregs and foulneſs. Iſa. 57. 10. 21.

Secondly, Religion does likewiſe tend to the happineſs of the outward man. Now the bleſſings of this kind are ſuch as either reſpect our *health*, or *eſtate*, or *reputation*, or relations; and in reſpect of all theſe Religion is highly advantageous to us.

1. As

1. As to our health, a Religious and vertuous life doth eminently conduce to that, and to long life as a conſequent of it. And in this ſenſe I underſtand theſe following Texts; *My Son forget not my Law, but let thy heart keep my Commandments; for length of days, and long life, ſhall they add to thee*; and v. 7, and 8. *Fear the Lord and depart from evil, it ſhall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones*; and v. 16. among the temporal advantages of wiſedom or Religion this mention'd as the firſt and principal, *length of days is in her right hand*; and v. 18. *ſhe is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her*; and again, *Whoſo findeth me, findeth life, but he that ſinneth againſt me wrongeth his own ſoul*; (that is injurious to his own life) *all they that hate me love death*; all which is undoubtedly true in a ſpiritual ſenſe, but is certainly meant by *Solomon* in the natural ſenſe. And theſe promiſes, of the bleſſings of health and long life to good men are not only declaratory of the good pleaſure and intention of God towards them, but likewiſe of the natural tendency of the thing. For Religion doth oblige men to the practice of thoſe vertues which do in their own nature conduce to the preſervation of our health, and the lengthning of

Prov. 3. 1, 2.

Prov. 8. 35, 36.

our

our days; ſuch as temperance and chaſtity and moderation of our paſſions. And the contrary vices to theſe do apparently tend to the impairing of mens health and the ſhortning of their days. How many have waſted and conſum'd their bodies by luſt, and brought grievous pains and mortal diſeaſes upon themſelves. See how the wiſe man deſcribes the ſad conſequences of this ſin, *He goes as an Oxe to the ſlaughter, till a dart ſtrike through his Liver; as a Bird haſteneth to the ſnare, and knoweth not that it is for his life*; and v. 25, 26, 27. *Let not thy heart decline to her ways, go not aſtray in her paths; for ſhe hath caſt down many wounded; yea many young men have been ſlain by her; her houſe is the way to Hell*, (that is, to the grave) *going down to the chambers of death.* How many have been ruin'd by intemperance and exceſs, and moſt unnaturally have perverted thoſe bleſſings which God hath given for the ſupport of nature to the overthrow and deſtruction of it? How often hath mens malice and envy and diſcontent againſt others terminated in a cruel revenge upon themſelves? How many by the wild fury and extravagancy of their own paſſions have put their bodies into a combuſtion, and fir'd their ſpirits; and by ſtirring up their rage

Prov. 7. 22, 23.

rage and choler againſt others have arm'd that fierce humour againſt themſelves?

2. As to our eſtates, Religion is likewiſe a mighty advantage to men in that reſpect. Not only in regard of God's more eſpecial providence and peculiar bleſſing which uſually attends good men in their undertakings and crowns them with good ſucceſs, but alſo from the nature of the thing. And this, I doubt not, is the meaning of thoſe expreſſions of the *Wiſe man* concerning the temporal benefits and advantages of wiſedom or Religion; *In her left hand are riches and honour*; *They that love me ſhall inherit ſubſtance, and I will fill their treaſures*; and this Religion principally does, by charging men with truth and fidelity and juſtice in their dealings, which are a ſure way of thriving and will hold out when all fraudulent arts and devices will fail. And this alſo *Solomon* obſerves to us; *He that walketh uprightly walketh ſurely, but he that perverteth his way ſhall be known*; his indirect dealing will be diſcover'd one time or other, and then loſes his reputation, and his intereſt ſinks. Falſhood and deceit onely ſerve a preſent turn, and the conſequence of them is pernicious; but truth and fidelity are of laſting advantage; *The righteous hath an*

Prov. 3. 16.
Prov. 8. 21.
Prov. 10. 9.
Prov. 10. 5.

ever

everlaſting foundation; The lip of truth is eſtabliſhed for ever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment. And Religion does likewiſe engage men to diligence and induſtry in their Callings, and how much this conduces to the advancement of mens fortunes daily experience teaches, and the *Wiſe-man* hath told us, *The diligent hand makes rich*; and again, *Seeſt thou a man diligent in buſineſs, he ſhall ſtand before Princes, he ſhall not ſtand before mean perſons.* Prov. 12. 19. Prov. 10. 4. Prov. 22. 19.

And where men by reaſon of the difficult circumſtances of their condition cannot arrive to any eminency of eſtate, yet Religion makes a compenſation for this by teaching men to be contented with that moderate and competent fortune which God hath given them. For the ſhorteſt way to be rich is not by enlarging our eſtates, but by contracting our deſires. What *Seneca* ſays of Philoſophy, is much more true of Religion, *præſtat opes ſapientia, quas cuicunque fecit ſupervacuas dedit*, it makes all thoſe rich to whom it makes riches ſuperfluous, and they are ſo to thoſe who are taught by Religion to be contented with ſuch a portion of them as God's providence hath thought fit to allot to them.

3. As to our reputation. There is no-

thing gives a man a more firm and eſtabliſh'd reputation among wiſe and ſerious perſons (whoſe judgment is onely valuable) than a prudent and ſubſtantial piety. This doth many times command reverence and eſteem from the worſer ſort of men, and ſuch as are no great friends to Religion; and ſometimes the force of truth will extort an acknowledgment of its excellency, even from its greateſt enemies. I know very well that good men may, and often do, blemiſh the reputation of their piety by over-acting ſome things in Religion; by an indiſcreet zeal about things wherein Religion is not concerned, by an ungratefull auſterity and ſowerneſs which Religion doth not require; by little affectations, and an imprudent oſtentation of devotion; but a ſubſtantial and ſolid, a diſcreet and unaffected piety, which makes no great noiſe and ſhow, but expreſſes it ſelf in a conſtant and ſerious devotion, and is accompanied with the fruits of goodneſs and kindneſs and righteouſneſs towards men, will not onely give a man a credit and value among the ſober and the vertuous, but even among the vicious and more degenerate ſort of men. Upon this account it is that the Apoſtle adviſeth Chriſtians, if they would recommend

themſelves to the eſteem of God and men, earneſtly to mind the weighty and ſubſtantial parts of Religion; *Let not then your good be evil ſpoken of; for the Kingdom of God is not meats and drinks, but righteouſneſs and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt; for he that in theſe things ſerveth Chriſt, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.*

It is true indeed, there are ſome perſons of ſo profligate a temper, and of ſuch an inveterate enmity to all goodneſs, as to ſcorn and reproach even Religion and Vertue it ſelf. But the reproach of ſuch perſons does not really wound a man's reputation. For why ſhould any man be troubled at the contumelies of thoſe whoſe judgment deſerves not to be valued, who deſpiſe goodneſs and good men out of malice and ignorance? If theſe reproaches which they caſt upon them were the cenſures of wiſe and ſober men, a man's reputation might be concern'd in them; but they are the raſh words of inconſiderate and injudicious men, the extravagant ſpeeches of thoſe who are unexperienc'd in the things they ſpeak againſt; and therefore no wiſe man will be troubl'd at them, or think either Religion or himſelf diſparaged by them.

4. As to our Relations. Religion alſo conduceth to the happineſs of theſe, as it derives a large and extenſive bleſſing upon all that belongs to us; the goodneſs of God being ſo diffuſive as to ſcatter his bleſſing *round about the habitations of the juſt*, and *to ſhew mercy to thouſands of them that love him and keep his Commandments.* So *David* tells us, *Bleſſed is the man that feareth the Lord, and delighteth greatly in his Commandments; His ſeed ſhall be mighty upon earth, The generation of the upright ſhall be bleſſed; Wealth and riches are in his houſe, and his righteouſneſs endureth for ever.* And ſo *Solomon*; *A good man leaveth an inheritance to his Childrens Children*; and again, *In the fear of the Lord is ſtrong confidence, and his Children ſhall have a place of refuge.* But the wicked derives a curſe upon all that is related to him, he is ſaid *to trouble his own houſe*; and again, *The wicked are overthrown and are not, but the houſe of the righteous ſhall ſtand.*

Pſal. 112. 1, 2, 3.

Prov. 13. 22.

Prov. 14. 26.

Prov. 11. 29.

Prov. 12. 7.

But ſetting aſide the conſideration of God's providence, Religion doth likewiſe in its own nature tend to the welfare of thoſe who are related to us; becauſe it lays the ſtricteſt obligations upon men to take care of their Families and Relations, and

and to make the beſt proviſion both for their comfortable ſubſiſtance here in this world and their ſalvation in the next. And thoſe who neglect thoſe duties the Scripture is ſo far from eſteeming them Chriſtians that it accounts them worſe than Heathens and Infidels, *He that provideth not for his own, eſpecially thoſe of his own houſe, is worſe than an Infidel, and hath deny'd the faith.* This I know is ſpoken in reſpect of temporal proviſion, but it holds *à fortiori* as to the care of their ſouls. 1 Tim. 5. 8.

Beſides, it is many times ſeen that the poſterity of holy and good men, eſpecially of ſuch as have evidenc'd their piety towards God by bounty and charity to men, have met with unuſual kindneſs and reſpect from others, and have by a ſtrange and ſecret diſpoſition of Divine providence been unexpectedly car'd and provided for; and that, as they have all the reaſon in the world to believe, upon the account and for the ſake of the piety and charity of their Parents. This *David* tells us from his own particular obſervation; *I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not ſeen the righteous forſaken, nor his ſeed begging bread.* And that by the *righteous* is here meant the *good and mercifull man* ap- Pſa. 37. 25.

pears from the deſcription of him in the
Ver. 26. next words, *He is ever merciſull and lendeth, and his ſeed is bleſſed.* And on the contrary, the poſterity of the wicked do many times inherit the fruit of their fathers ſins and vices; and that not onely by a juſt judgment of God, but from the natural courſe and conſequence of things. And in this ſenſe that expreſſion in *Job* is often verifi'd, that *God lays up the iniquity of*
Job 21.19. *wicked men for their Children.* And doth not experience teſtifie that the intemperate and unjuſt do many times tranſmit their bodily infirmities and diſeaſes to their Children, and entail a ſecret curſe upon their eſtates which does either inſenſibly waſte and conſume it, or eat out the heart and comfort of it? Thus you ſee how Religion in all reſpects conduces to the happineſs of this life.

II. Religion and Vertue do likewiſe moſt certainly and directly tend to the eternal happineſs and ſalvation of men in the other world. And this is incomparably the greateſt advantage that redounds to men by being Religious, in compariſon of which all temporal conſiderations *are leſs than nothing and vanity.* The worldly advantages that Religion brings to men

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in this preſent life are a ſenſible recommendation of Religion, even to the loweſt and meaneſt ſpirits: But to thoſe who are rais'd above ſenſe and aſpire after immortality, who believe the perpetual duration of their ſouls and the reſurrection of their bodies; to thoſe who are throughly convinc'd of the inconſiderableneſs of this ſhort dying life and of all the concernments of it, in compariſon of that eternal ſtate which remains for us in another life; to theſe, I ſay, the conſideration of a future happineſs and of thoſe unſpeakable and everlaſting rewards which ſhall then be given to holineſs and vertue, is certainly the moſt powerfull motive and the moſt likely to prevail upon them. For thoſe who are perſwaded that they ſhall continue for ever cannot chuſe but aſpire after a happineſs commenſurate to their duration, nor can any thing that is conſcious to its ſelf of its own immortality be ſatisfy'd and contented with any thing leſs than the hopes of an endleſs felicity. And this hope Religion alone gives men, and the Chriſtian Religion onely can ſettle men in a firm and unſhaken aſſurance of it. But becauſe all men who have entertain'd any Religion have conſented to theſe principles, of the *immortality of the*

ſoul and the *recompences of another world*, and have always promis'd to themſelves ſome rewards of piety and vertue after this life; and becauſe I did more particularly deſign from this *Text* to ſpeak of the temporal benefits and advantages which redound to men from Religion, therefore I ſhall content my ſelf to ſhew very briefly how a religious and vertuous life doth conduce to our future happineſs. And that upon theſe two accounts; from the promiſe of God, and from the nature of the thing.

1 Tim. 4. 8. 1. From the promiſe of God. *Godlineſs* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *hath the promiſe of the life that is to come.* God hath all along in the Scripture ſuſpended the promiſe of eternal life upon this condition. He hath peremptorily declar'd that without obedience and holineſs of life no man ſhall ever ſee the Lord. And this very thing, that it is the conſtitution and appointment of God, might be argument enough to us (if there were no other) to convince us of the neceſſity of obeying the Laws of God in order to our happineſs, and to perſwade us thereunto. For eternal life is the gift of God, and he may do what he will with his own. He is maſter of his own favours and may diſpence

diſpence them upon what terms and conditions he pleaſes. But it is no hard condition that he hath impoſed upon us. If Religion brought no advantages to us in this world, yet the happineſs of heaven is ſo great as will abundantly recompence all our pains and endeavours; there is temptation enough in the reward to engage any man in the work. Had God thought fit to have impos'd the moſt grievous and difficult things upon us, ought we not to have ſubmitted to them and to have undertaken them with cheerfulneſs upon ſuch great and glorious encouragements? As *Naaman*'s ſervants ſaid to him in another caſe, *Had he bid thee doe ſome great thing wouldeſt thou not have done it?* So if God had ſaid that without poverty and actual martyrdom *no man ſhall ſee the Lord*, would not any man that believes heaven and hell and underſtands what theſe words ſignifie and what it is to eſcape extream and eternal miſery, and to enjoy unſpeakable and endleſs glory, have been willing to accept theſe conditions? *How much more, when he hath onely ſaid, waſh and be clean*; and *Let every man that hath this hope in Him, puriſie himſelf as he is pure?* But God hath not

not dealt thus with us, nor is the impoſing of this condition of eternal life a meer arbitrary conſtitution; therefore I ſhall endeavour to ſhew,

2*dly*, That a Religious and holy life doth from the very nature and reaſon of the thing conduce to our future happineſs, by way of neceſſary diſpoſition and preparation of us for it. We cannot be otherwiſe happy but by our conformity to God, without this we cannot poſſibly love him nor find any pleaſure or happineſs in communion with him. For we cannot love a nature contrary to our own, nor delight to converſe with it. Therefore Religion, in order to the fitting of us for the happineſs of the next life, does deſign to mortifie our luſts and paſſions and to reſtrain us from the inordinate love of the groſs and ſenſual delights of this world; to call off our minds from theſe inferiour things and to raiſe them to higher and more ſpiritual objects, that we may be diſpos'd for the happineſs of the other world, and taught not to reliſh the delights of it: whereas ſhould we ſet our hearts onely upon theſe things, and be able to taſte no pleaſure in any thing but what is ſenſual and earthly, we

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muſt needs be extremely miſerable when we come into the other world; becauſe we ſhould meet with nothing to entertain our ſelves withall, no employment ſuitable to our diſpoſition, no pleaſure that would agree with our deprav'd appetites and vicious inclinations. All that Heaven and Happineſs ſignifies is unſuitable to a wicked man, and therefore could be no felicity to him. But this I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more fully to in my laſt Diſcourſe.

From all that hath been ſaid the reaſonableneſs of Religion clearly appears, which tends ſo directly to the happineſs of men and is upon all accounts calculated for our benefit. Let but all things be truly conſidered and caſt up and it will be found that there is no advantage to any man from an irreligious and vicious courſe of life. I challenge any one to inſtance in any real benefit that ever came to him this way. Let the ſinner declare what he hath found by experience. Hath lewdneſs and intemperance been more for his health than if he had liv'd chaſtly and ſoberly? Hath falſhood and injuſtice prov'd at the long run more for the advancement and ſecu-

ſecurity of his eſtate than truth and honeſty would have done? Hath any vice that he hath lived in made him more true friends, and gain'd him a better reputation in the world than the practice of holineſs and vertue would have done? Hath he found *that* peace and ſatisfaction of mind in an evil courſe, and *that* quiet enjoyment of himſelf, and comfortable aſſurance of God's favour, and good hopes of his future condition, which a religious and vertuous life would have given him? Nay on the contrary, have not ſome of his vices weaken'd his body and broken his health, have not others diſſipated his eſtate and reduc'd him to want? What notorious vice is there that doth not blemiſh a man's reputation, and make him either hated or deſpis'd, and that not onely by the wiſe and the vertuous but even by the generality of men? But was ever any wicked man free from the ſtings of a guilty conſcience and the torment of a reſtleſs and uneaſie mind, from the ſecret dread of Divine diſpleaſure, and of the vengeance of another world? Let the ſinner freely ſpeak the very inward ſenſe of his ſoul in this matter, and ſpare not; and I doubt not, if he will deal clearly and impartially, but that

that he will acknowledge all this to be true, and is able to confirm it from his own ſad experience. For this is the natural fruit of ſin and the preſent revenge which it takes upon ſinners, beſides that fearfull puniſhment which ſhall be inflicted on them in another life.

What Reaſon then can any man pretend againſt Religion, when it is ſo apparently for the benefit not onely of humane ſociety but of every particular perſon; when there is no real intereſt of this world but may ordinarily be as effectually promoted and purſued to as great advantage, nay uſually to far greater, by a man that *lives ſoberly and righteouſly and godly in the world*, than by any one that leads the contrary courſe of life? Let no man then ſay, with thoſe prophane perſons whom the *Prophet* ſpeaks of, *It is in vain to ſerve the Lord, and what profit is it that we have kept his Commandments?* God has not been ſo hard a maſter to us that we have reaſon thus to complain of him. He hath given us no Laws but what are for our good, nay ſo gracious hath he been to us as to link together our duty and our intereſt, and to make thoſe very things the inſtances of our obedience which are the natural means and cauſes of our happi-

Mal. 3. 14.

neſs.

neſs. The Devil was ſo far in the right, when he charg'd *Job* that he did not *ſerve God for nought.* 'Tis he himſelf that is the hard maſter and makes men ſerve him for nought, who rewards his drudges and ſlaves with nothing but ſhame and ſorrow and miſery. But God requires no man's ſervice upon hard and unreaſonable terms. The greateſt part of our work is a preſent reward to it ſelf, and for whatever elſe we do or ſuffer for him he offers us abundant conſideration. And if men did but truly and wiſely love themſelves they would upon this very ground, if there were no other, become Religious. For when all is done there is no man can ſerve his own intereſt better than by ſerving God. Religion conduceth both to our preſent and future happineſs, and when the Goſpel chargeth us with piety towards God, and juſtice and charity towards men, and temperance and chaſtity in reference to our ſelves, the true interpretation of theſe Laws is this, God requires of men in order to their eternal happineſs that they ſhould do thoſe things which tend to their temporal welfare, that is, in plainer words, he promiſes to make us happy for ever upon condition that we will but do that which is beſt

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for our ſelves in this world. To conclude, Religion is founded in the intereſt of men rightly apprehended. So that if *the God of this world* and the luſts of men did not *blind their eyes*, ſo as to render them unfit to diſcern their true intereſt, it would be impoſſible, ſo long as men love themſelves and deſire their own happineſs to keep them from being religious; for they could not but conclude that to be their intereſt, and being ſo convinc'd they would reſolve to purſue it and ſtick to it.

PHIL.

PHIL. III. 8.

Yea doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord.

IN the beginning of this Chapter the *Apoſtle* makes a compariſon between the Jewiſh and the Chriſtian Religion, and ſhews the Chriſtian to be in truth and ſubſtance what the Jewiſh was onely in type and ſhadow, v. 3. *We are the Circumciſion which worſhip God in the ſpirit.* And then he enumerates the ſeveral privileges he was partaker of by virtue of his being born in the Jewiſh Church, v. 4, 5, 6. *Though I might alſo have confidence in the fleſh, if any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might truſt in the fleſh, I more; circumciſed the eighth day, of the ſtock of Iſrael,* &c. And yet he tells us he was contented to forgoe all theſe advantages for Chriſt and the

Chriſtian Religion, v. 7. *But what things were gain to me thoſe I counted loſs for Chriſt.* And not onely theſe, but if there were any thing elſe that men value in this world he was willing to hazard that alſo upon the ſame account, v. 8. *Yea doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord.*

In which words the Apoſtle declares the high eſteem he had for the Chriſtian Religion, which he calls the *knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus* his *Lord*; the excellency whereof appear'd ſo great to him that he valued nothing in compariſon of the advantages which he had by the knowledge of it.

My deſign at this time from this Text is to repreſent the excellency of this knowledge of the Chriſtian Religion above that of any other Religion or Inſtitution in the world. And here I ſhall not conſider the external evidence which we have of the truth of Chriſtianity and of the Divinity of its doctrine, in which reſpect it hath incomparably the advantage of any other Religion: but onely the internal excellencies of the Doctrine it ſelf, abſtracting from the Divine authority of it: And that in theſe four reſpects:

Firſt,

Firſt, As it does more clearly reveal to us the nature of God, which is the great foundation of all Religion.

Secondly, As it gives us a more certain and perfect Law for the government of our lives.

Thirdly, As it propounds to us more powerfull Arguments to perſwade men to the obedience of this Law.

Fourthly, As it furniſhes us with better motives and conſiderations to patience and contentedneſs under the evils and afflictions of this life. Now theſe are the greateſt advantages that any Religion can have, To give men right apprehenſions of God, a perfect rule of good life, and efficacious arguments to perſwade men to be good, and patiently to bear the evils and ſufferings of this life. And theſe ſhall be the heads of my following diſcourſe.

I. The Chriſtian Religion doth more clearly reveal to us the nature of God, than any Religion ever did. And to have right apprehenſions of God is the great foundation of all Religion. For according as mens notions of God are ſuch will their Religion be. If men have groſs and falſe conceptions of God their Religion will

be abſurd and ſuperſtitious. If men fancy God to be an ill-natur'd Being arm'd with infinite power, one that delights in the miſery and ruine of his creatures and is ready to take all advantages againſt them, they may fear him but they will hate him; and they will be apt to be ſuch towards one another as they fancy God to be towards them, for all Religion doth naturally incline men to imitate him whom they worſhip.

Now the Chriſtian Religion gives us a more perfect, and a more lovely character of God, than any Religion ever did. It repreſents him to us as a pure ſpirit, (which the Heathens did not generally believe) and that he is to be worſhip'd in ſuch a manner as is moſt ſuitable to his ſpiritual nature, (which not onely the Heathens but even the Jews themſelves were extremely miſtaken about) *God is a ſpirit* (ſays our Saviour) *and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth.* It is true indeed God himſelf did command ſacrifices to the Jews, and all thoſe external and troubleſome obſervances of which their Religion did conſiſt: But then it is to be conſider'd, that he did not inſtitute this way of Worſhip becauſe it was moſt ſuitable to his own nature, but

but becauſe of the carnality of their hearts and the proneneſs of that people to Idolatry. God did not preſcribe theſe things becauſe they were beſt, but becauſe the temper of that People would then admit of nothing better. And this the Scripture gives us ſeveral intimations of, *Thou deſireſt not ſacrifice, thou delighteſt not in burnt-offerings*, ſaith *David*: And elſewhere more expreſly to this purpoſe; *I ſpake not unto your Fathers* (ſays God by the Prophet *Jeremiah*) *nor commanded them, in the day that I brought them forth out of the Land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings and ſacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, ſaying, Obey my voice:* A ſufficient intimation that God did not primarily intend to appoint this way of worſhip, and to impoſe it upon them as that which was moſt proper and agreeable to him, but that he condeſcended to it as moſt accommodate to their preſent ſtate and inclination. And in this ſenſe alſo ſome underſtand what God ſays to the ſame people by the Prophet *Ezekiel*, that he *gave them ſtatutes that were not good.*

Pſal. 51. 16.

Jer. 7. 22.

Ezek. 20. 25.

And as the Chriſtian Religion gives a more perfect, ſo a more amiable and lovely character of the Divine nature. No

Religion that ever was in the world does so fully represent the goodness of God and his tender love to mankind, which is the best and most powerfull argument to the love of God. The Heathens did generally dread God, and looked upon him as fierce and cruel and revengefull; and therefore they endeavoured to appease him by the horrid and barbarous sacrifices of men, and of their own children. And all along in the *Old Testament* God is generally represented as very strict and severe. But there are no where so plain and full declarations of his mercy and love to the sons of men as are made in the *Gospel*. In the *Old Testament* God is usually styl'd *the Lord of Hosts*, *the great and the terrible God*: But in the *New Testament* he is represented to us by milder titles, *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, *the father of mercies*, *and the God of all consolations*; *the God of all patience*, *the God of love and peace*; nay he is said to be *love* it self and to *dwell in love*. And this difference between the style of the *Old* and *New Testament* is so remarkable, that one of the greatest *Sects* in the Primitive Church (I mean that of the *Gnosticks*) did upon this very ground found their *heresie* of two Gods; the *one* evil and fierce and cruel,

cruel, whom they call'd the God of the *Old Teſtament*; the *other* good and kind and mercifull, whom they call'd the God of the *New*. So great a difference is there between the repreſentations which are made of God in the Books of the Jewiſh and the Chriſtian Religion, as to give at leaſt ſome colour and pretence for an imagination of two Gods.

II. Chriſtian Religion hath given us a more certain and perfect Law for the government of our lives. It hath made our duty more plain and certain in many inſtances, than either the Philoſophy of the *Heathen*, or the precepts of *Moſes* had done. It commands univerſal love and kindneſs and good will among men, a readineſs to forgive our greateſt enemies, *to doe good to them that hate us, to bleſs them that curſe us*, and *to pray for them that deſpitefully uſe us and perſecute us*. And does inculcate theſe precepts more vehemently, and forbid malice and hatred and revenge and contention more ſtrictly and peremptorily than any Religion ever did before; as will appear to any one that does but attentively reade our *Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount*.

And as Chriſtianity hath given us a more *certain* ſo likewiſe a more *perfect* Law for the government of our lives. All the precepts of it are reaſonable and wiſe, requiring ſuch duties of us as are ſuitable to the light of nature and do approve themſelves to the beſt reaſon of mankind, ſuch as have their foundation in the nature of God, and are an imitation of the Divine excellencies, ſuch as tend to the perfection of humane nature and to raiſe the minds of men to the higheſt pitch of goodneſs and vertue. The Laws of our Religion are ſuch as are generally uſefull and beneficial to the world, as do tend to the outward peace and the health, to the inward comfort and contentment, and to the univerſal happineſs of mankind. They command nothing that is unneceſſary and burdenſome, as were the numerous rites and ceremonies of the Jewiſh Religion, but what is reaſonable, and uſefull, and ſubſtantial: And they omit nothing that may tend to the glory of God or the welfare of men, nor do they reſtrain us in any thing but what is contrary either to the regular inclinations of nature or to our reaſon and true intereſt. They forbid us nothing but what is baſe and unworthy, to ſerve our humours

and

and paſſions, to reproach our underſtandings and to make our ſelves fools and beaſts; in a word, nothing but what tends either to our private harm and prejudice, or to publick diſorder and confuſion.

And that this is the tenour of the Laws of the Goſpel will appear to any one from our *Saviour*'s Sermons and Diſcourſes: particularly that upon the Mount; wherein he charges his Diſciples and followers to be humble, and meek, and righteous, and mercifull, and pure, and peaceable, and patient under ſufferings and perſecutions, and good and kind to all even to thoſe that are evil and injurious to us, and to endeavour to excell in all goodneſs and vertue. This will appear likewiſe from the Writings of the holy Apoſtles; I will inſtance but in ſome few paſſages in them. St. *Paul* repreſents to us the deſign of the Chriſtian doctrine in a very few words, but of admiral ſenſe and weight; *The grace of God that bringeth ſalvation hath appear'd to all men, teaching us that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts we ſhould live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world.* Tit. 2. 11, 12. The ſame Apoſtle makes this the main and fundamental condition of the Covenant of the Goſpel on our part, *Let every one that* 2 Tim. 2. 19.

that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. St. *James* describes the Christian doctrine (which he calls *the wisedom that is from above*) by these characters, *It is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easie to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisie.*

2 Pet. 1. 3, 4. St. *Peter* calls the Gospel, *the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and vertue; whereby* (saith he) *are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of a divine nature having escap'd the corruption that is in the world through lust;* and upon this consideration he exhorts them *to give all*

V. 5, 6, 7. *diligence to add to their faith* the several vertues of a good life, without which he tells them *they are barren and unfruitfull in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* I will conclude with that full and comprehensive passage of St. *Paul* to the *Philippians, Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest,* (ὅσα σεμνὰ, whatsoever things are of venerable esteem) *whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure* (or chast) *whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any vertue, if there be any praise, think on these things.*

But

But the perfection and the reaſonableneſs of the Laws of Chriſtianity will moſt plainly appear by taking a brief ſurvey of them. And they may all be referr'd to theſe two general heads. They are either ſuch as tend to the perfection of humane nature and to make men ſingly and perſonally good, or ſuch as tend to the peace and happineſs of humane Society.

Firſt, Such as tend to the perfection of humane nature and to make men good ſingly and perſonally conſider'd. And the precepts of this kind may be diſtributed likewiſe into two ſorts, ſuch as enjoyn piety towards God, or ſuch as require the good order and government of our ſelves in reſpect of the enjoyments and pleaſures of this life.

1. Such as enjoyn Piety towards God. All the duties of Chriſtian Religion which reſpect God are no other but what natural light prompts men to, excepting the two Sacraments (which are of great uſe and ſignificancy in the Chriſtian Religion) and praying to God in the name and by the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt. For the ſum of natural Religion as it refers more immediately to God is this, That we ſhould inwardly reverence

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and love God, and that we ſhould expreſs our inward reverence and love of him by external worſhip and adoration, and by our readineſs to receive and obey all the revelations of his will: And that we ſhould teſtifie our dependence upon him, and our confidence of his goodneſs, by conſtant prayers and ſupplications to him for mercy and help for our ſelves and others; And that we ſhould acknowledge our obligations to him for the many favours and benefits which every day and every minute we receive from him, by continual praiſes and thankſgivings: And that on the contrary we ſhould not entertain any unworthy thoughts of God, nor give that honour and reverence which is due to him, to any other; that we ſhould not worſhip him in any manner that is either unſuitable to the excellency and perfection of his nature, or contrary to his revealed will; that we ſhould carefully avoid the prophane and irreverent uſe of his Name by curſing, or cuſtomary ſwearing, and take heed of the neglect or contempt of his Worſhip or any thing belonging to it. This is the ſum of the firſt part of natural Religion, and theſe are the general heads of thoſe duties which every man's reaſon tells him he owes to God;

God: And theſe are the very things which the Chriſtian Religion does expreſly require of us, as might be evidenc'd from particular Texts in the *New Teſtament*. So that there is nothing in this part of Chriſtianity but what agrees very well with the reaſon of mankind.

2. Such precepts as require the good order and government of our ſelves in reſpect of the pleaſures and enjoyments of this life. Chriſtian Religion commands whatſoever things are pure and chaſt, all manner of ſobriety and temperance and moderation in reference to our appetites and paſſions; and forbids whatever is unnatural, and unreaſonable, and unhealthfull in the uſe of pleaſures and of any of God's creatures. Hither belong all thoſe Texts which require of us that we ſhould *not walk after the fleſh but after the ſpirit*, Rom. 8. 1. that we ſhould *cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit*, 2 Cor. 7. 1. that we ſhould *be holy in all manner of converſation*. 1 Pet. 1. 15. St. *John* diſtributes the luſts and irregular appetites of men into three kinds, voluptuouſneſs, covetouſneſs, and ambition, anſwerably to the three ſorts of tempting objects that are in the world, pleaſures, riches and honours, *All that is in the world, the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes*, 1 Joh. 2. 16.

eyes, and the pride of life, &c. And Chri-
Luke 12. 15. ſtianity doth ſtrictly forbid all theſe, *Take heed and beware of Covetouſneſs* (ſays our Saviour, and he adds this excellent reaſon) *for a man's life conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth.* It forbids pride and ambition and vain glory, and commands humility and modeſty
Mat. 11. 29 and condeſcenſion to others; *Learn of me* (ſays our Saviour) *for I am meek and low-*
Rom. 12. 16. *ly in ſpirit*; *Mind not high things, but con-*
Phil. 2. 3. *deſcend to them that are of low degree*; *Let nothing be done through vain glory, but in lowlineſs of mind let each eſteem other better than themſelves.* And in reference to ſenſual pleaſures it forbids all irregularity and exceſs, and ſtrictly enjoyns pu-
Luke 21. 36. rity and temperance; cautioning us *to take heed leſt we be overcharged with ſurfeit-*
Ro. 13. 13. *ing and drunkenneſs*; charging us *to walk decently as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenneſs, not in chambering and wan-*
1 Pet. 2. 11. *tonneſs*; *to abſtain from fleſhly luſts which war againſt the ſoul.* Now all theſe precepts do not onely tend to beget in us ſuch vertues and diſpoſitions as are reaſonable and ſuitable to our nature and every way for our temporal convenience and advantage, but ſuch as do likewiſe exceedingly diſpoſe us to piety

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and religion by purifying our ſouls from the droſs and filth of ſenſual delights. For covetouſneſs debaſeth a man's ſpirit, and ſinks it into the earth; intemperance and luſt cloud a man's underſtanding, and indiſpoſe it for the contemplation of things ſpiritual and divine. Thus you ſee how the Precepts of Chriſtianity do tend to the perfection of humane nature, conſidering men ſingly and perſonally.

Secondly, The other ſort of Precepts are ſuch as tend to the peace and happineſs of humane Society. And the reaſon of mankind can deviſe nothing more proper to this end than the Laws of Chriſtianity are. For they command all thoſe vertues which are apt to ſweeten the ſpirits and allay the paſſions and animoſities of men one towards another. They require us *to love our neighbour* (that is every man in the world, even our greateſt enemies) *as our ſelves*. And for this end among others was the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper*, the Feaſt of love inſtituted: that by commemorating the love of our dying Saviour, who laid down his life for his enemies, we might be put in mind how we ought to love one another.

And by this Law of loving all men even

even our enemies, Christian Religion discovers it self not onely to be the most innocent and harmless, but the most generous and best natur'd Institution that ever was in the world. For in pursuance of this general precept it commands us, *to do good to all men; if it be possible, and as much as in us lies to live peaceably with all men*; to be *kind one to another*, ready to gratifie and oblige men; to be *tender-hearted* and compassionate towards those that are in want or misery, and ready to supply and relieve them; to sympathize with one another in our joys and sorrows, *to mourn with those that mourn, and to rejoyce with them that rejoyce; to bear one anothers burdens, and to forbear one another in love*; to be easily reconcil'd to them that have offended us, and to be ready to *forgive from our hearts* the greatest injuries that can be done to us, and that without bounds and limits *even to seventy seven times*; as our Saviour expresseth it.

The Laws of Christianity do likewise secure both the private interests of men and the publick peace, by confirming and enforcing all the dictates of nature concerning Justice and Equity, and our doing to others as we would have them

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to do to us; and by commanding obedience to humane Laws which decide mens rights and ſubmiſſion to government under pain of damnation: And by forbiding whatever is contrary to theſe, violence and oppreſſion, defrauding and overreaching one another, perfidiouſneſs and treachery, breach of truſts, oaths or promiſes, undutifulneſs to ſuperiours, ſedition and rebellion againſt Magiſtracy and Authority: And if there be any thing elſe that is apt to diſturb the peace of the world and to alienate the affections of men from one another, as ſowerneſs of diſpoſition, and rudeneſs of behaviour, cenſoriouſneſs and ſiniſter interpretation of things, all croſs and diſtaſtfull humours, and whatever elſe may render the converſation of men grievous and uneaſie to one another: All theſe are either expreſly, or by clear conſequence and deduction forbidden in the new Teſtament.

And now what could any Religion do more towards the reforming of the diſpoſitions and manners of men? What Laws can be devis'd more proper and effectual to advance the nature of man to its higheſt perfection, to procure the tranquillity of mens minds and the peace and happineſs of the world, than theſe precepts of

Christianity are? Several of which (as those of *loving our enemies*, of *not revenging injuries*, of *rendring good for evil*, &c.) though they have been esteem'd reasonable by some of the wisest among the Heathen, yet by reason of the degeneracy of the world, and of the obscurity and uncertainty of humane reason, they never obtain'd to have the estimation and force of natural Laws. So that we owe to Christianity the discovery of the most certain and perfect Rule of life that ever the world was acquainted withall.

III. Christian Religion propounds the most powerfull arguments to perswade men to the obedience of these Laws. The Gospel offers such considerations to us, as are fit to work very forcibly upon two of the most swaying and governing passions in the mind of man, our hopes and our fears. To encourage our hopes it gives us the highest assurance of the greatest and most lasting happiness, in case of obedience; and to awaken our fear it threatens sinners with the most dreadfull and durable torments, in case of disobedience. *To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and im-*

Rom. 2. 7, 8.

immortality, it promiſeth *eternal life: But unto them that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs*, it threatens *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh.* And this is that which makes the doctrine of the Goſpel ſo powerfull an inſtrument for the reforming of the world, that it propoſes to men ſuch glorious rewards and ſuch terrible puniſhments as no Religion ever did; and to make the conſideration of them more effectual, it gives us far greater aſſurance of the reality, and certainty of theſe things than ever the world had before. This account the *Apoſtle* gives us of the ſucceſs and efficacy of the Goſpel upon the minds of men, and for this reaſon he calls it *the power of God unto ſalvation*, becauſe therein *the wrath of God is reveal'd from Heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men.* Before the revelation of the Goſpel the wickedneſs and impenitency of the Heathen-world was a much more excuſable thing, becauſe they were in a great meaſure ignorant of the rewards of another life, and had generally but very uncertain and obſcure apprehenſions of thoſe things which urge men moſt powerfully to forſake their ſins, and are the moſt prevalent arguments to a good life. So St. *Paul* tells the *Athe-*

Rom. 1. 16. 18.

nians the moſt knowing among the Heathen, *The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent; becauſe he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead.* The Reſurrection of *Jeſus Chriſt* from the dead hath given the world that full aſſurance of another life after this and of a future Judgment which it never had before, for *He* whom God rais'd from the dead did declare and teſtifie that *it was he who was ordain'd of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.* And the firm belief of a future Judgment, which ſhall *render to every man according to his deeds*, if it be well conſider'd, is to a reaſonable nature the moſt forcible motive of all other to a good life; becauſe it is taken from the conſideration of the greateſt and moſt laſting happineſs and miſery that humane nature is capable of. So that the Laws of Chriſtianity have the firmeſt ſanction of any Laws in the world to ſecure the obedience and obſervance of them: For what can reſtrain men from ſin if the terrours of the Lord and the evident danger of eternal deſtruction will not?

Act. 17. 30, 31.

Act. 10. 42.

not? What encouragement can be given to goodneſs beyond the hopes of Heaven and the aſſurance of an endleſs felicity?

IV. The Chriſtian Religion furniſheth us with the beſt motives and conſiderations to patience and contentedneſs under the evils and afflictions of this life. This was one great deſign of Philoſophy, to ſupport men under the evils and calamities which this life is incident to, and to fortifie their ſpirits againſt ſufferings. And to this end the wiſeſt among the Heathens rack'd their wits and caſt about every way, they advanc'd all ſorts of principles and manag'd every little argument and conſideration to the utmoſt advantage. And yet after all theſe attempts they have not been able to give any conſiderable comfort and eaſe to the mind of man under any of the great evils and preſſures of this life. *The bed is ſhorter than that a man can ſtretch himſelf upon it, and the covering narrower than that a man can wrap himſelf in it.* All the wiſe ſayings and advices which Philoſophers could muſter up to this purpoſe have prov'd ineffectual to the common people and the generality of mankind, and have help'd

onely to ſupport ſome few ſtout and obſtinate minds, which without the aſſiſtance of Philoſophy would have held up pretty well of themſelves.

Some of the Philoſophers have run ſo far back for arguments of comfort againſt pain as to call every thing into queſtion, and to *doubt* whether there were any ſuch thing as ſenſe or pain. And yet for all that when any great evil has been upon them, they would *certainly* ſigh and groan as pitifully and cry out as loud as other men.

Others have ſought to eaſe themſelves of all the evil of affliction by diſputing ſubtilly againſt it, and pertinaciouſly maintaining that afflictions are no real evils but onely in opinion and imagination, and therefore a wiſe man ought not to be troubl'd at them. But he muſt be a very wiſe man that can forbear being troubl'd at things that are very troubleſome. And yet thus *Poſſidonius* (as *Tully* tells us) diſtinguiſh'd, he could not deny pain to be *very troubleſome* but for all that he was reſolv'd *never to acknowledge it to be an evil.* But ſure it is a very ſlender comfort that relies upon this nice diſtinction between things being *troubleſome* and being *evils*, when all the evil

of

of affliction lies in the trouble it creates to us. But when the beſt that can be is made of this argument, it is good for nothing but to be thrown away as a ſtupid Paradox and againſt the common ſenſe of mankind.

Others have endeavoured to delude their trouble by a graver way of reaſoning, that theſe things are fatal and neceſſary and therefore no body ought to be troubled at them, it being in vain to be troubled at that which we cannot help. And yet perhaps it might as reaſonably be ſaid on the other ſide that this very conſideration, *that a thing cannot be help'd*, is one of the juſteſt cauſes of trouble to a wiſe man. For it were ſome kind of comfort if theſe evils were to be avoided, becauſe then we might be carefull to prevent them another time; but if they be neceſſary then my trouble is as fatal as the calamity that occaſions it, and though I know it in vain to be troubled for that which I cannot help yet I cannot chuſe but be afflicted. It was a ſmart reply that *Auguſtus* made to one that miniſtred this comfort to him of the fatality of things, *Hoc ipſum eſt* (ſays he) *quod me male habet*, this was ſo far from giving any eaſe to his mind that *this was the very thing that troubled him.*

Others have try'd to divert and entertain the troubles of other men by pretty and plauſible *ſayings*, ſuch as this, *That if evils are long they are but light, if ſharp but ſhort*, and a hundred ſuch like. Now I am apt to imagine that it is but very ſmall comfort that a plain and ordinary man, lying under a ſharp fit of the Stone for a week together, receives from this fine Sentence. For what pleaſure ſoever men that are at eaſe and leiſure may take in being the Authours of witty ſayings, I doubt it is but poor conſolation that a man under great and ſtinging afflictions finds from them.

The beſt moral argument to patience, in my opinion, is the advantage of patience it ſelf. To bear evils as quietly as we can is the way to make them lighter and eaſier. But to toſs and fling and to be reſtleſs is good for nothing but to fret and enrage our pain, to gall our ſores and to make the burthen that is upon us ſit more uneaſie. But this is properly no conſideration of comfort, but an art of managing our ſelves under afflictions ſo as not to make them more grievous than indeed they are.

But now the arguments which Chriſtianity propounds to us are ſuch as are a juſt and reaſonable encouragement to men to bear

bear ſufferings patiently. Our Religion ſets before us not the example of a ſtupid *Stoick*, who had by obſtinate principles harden'd himſelf againſt all ſenſe of pain beyond the common meaſures of humanity, but an example that lies level to all mankind, of a man like our ſelves, that had a tender ſenſe of the leaſt ſuffering and yet patiently endur'd the greateſt; of *Jeſus the Authour and finiſher of our faith, who for the joy that was ſet before him endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right hand of the throne of God.* Heb. 1. 22. God thought it expedient that the firſt Chriſtians ſhould by great hardſhips and perſecutions be train'd up for glory, and to animate and encourage them hereto the *Captain of our ſalvation was crown'd by ſufferings.* Heb. 2. 10. Much more ſhould the conſideration of this pattern arm us with patience againſt the common and ordinary calamities of this life, eſpecially if we conſider his example with this advantage that though his ſufferings were wholly undeſerv'd, and not for himſelf but for us, yet he bore them patiently.

But the main conſideration of all is, the glory which ſhall follow our ſufferings as the reward of *them*, if they be for God and his cauſe; and if upon any other innocent account,

2 Cor. 4. 17. count, as reward of our patience. *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Christian Religion hath secur'd us that we shall be infinite gainers by our sufferings. And who would not be content to suffer upon terms of such advantage? to *pass through many tribulations into the Kingdom of God*, and to endure a short affliction for an endless happiness? The assurance of a future blessedness is a cordial that will revive our spirits more in the day of adversity, than all the wise sayings and considerations of Philosophy.

These are the arguments which Christianity propounds to us, and they are firm and sound at the bottom; they have strength and substance in them, and are apt to work upon humane nature, and the most ordinary understanding is capable of the force of them. In the strength and virtue of this great example, and in contemplation of this glorious reward, with what resolution and chearfulness, with what courage and patience did vast numbers of all sorts of people in the first Ages of Christianity, not only men but women, not onely those of greater spirit and more generous education but those of the poorest and lowest condition, not onely the learned and the wise but the igno-

ignorant and illiterate, encounter all the rage and malice of the world and embrace torments and death? Had the precepts and counſels of Philoſophy ever any ſuch effect upon the minds of men? I will conclude this with a paſſage in the life of *Lipſius*, who was a great ſtudier and admirer of the *Stoical* Philoſophy. When he lay upon his death-bed, and one of his friends who came to viſit him told him that he needed not uſe arguments to perſwade him to patience under his pains, the Philoſophy which he had ſtudied ſo much would furniſh him with motives enough to that purpoſe, he anſwers him with this ejaculation, *Domine Jeſu, da mihi patientiam Chriſtianam, Lord Jeſus, give me Chriſtian patience.* No patience like to that which the conſiderations of Chriſtianity are apt to work in us.

And now I have as briefly and plainly as I could endeavour'd to repreſent to you the excellency of the Chriſtian Religion, both in reſpect of the clear diſcoveries which it makes to us of the nature of God which is the great foundation of all Religion, and likewiſe in reſpect of the perfection of its Laws and the power of its arguments to perſwade men both to obey and ſuffer the will of God. By which you may ſee, what

what the proper tendency and design of this Religion is, and what the Laws and precepts of it would make men if they would truly observe them and live according to them, substantially Religious towards God, chast and temperate, patient and contented in reference to themselves and the dispensations of God's providence towards them, just and honest, kind and peaceable and good natur'd towards all men. In a word, the Gospel describes God to us in all respects such a one as we would wish him to be, gives us such Laws as every man that understands himself would chuse to live by, propounds such arguments to perswade to the obedience of these Laws as no man that wisely loves himself and hath any tenderness for his own interest and happiness either in this world or the other, can refuse to be mov'd withall.

And now methinks I may with some confidence challenge any Religion in the world to shew such a compleat body and collection of holy and reasonable Laws establish'd upon such promises and threatnings as the Gospel contains. And if any man can produce a Religion that can reasonably pretend to an equal or a greater confirmation than the Gospel hath, a Religion

ligion the precepts and promiſes and threatnings whereof are calculated to make men wiſer and better, more temperate and more chaſt, more meek and more patient, more kind and more juſt, than the laws and motives of Chriſtianity are apt to make men; if any man can produce ſuch a Religion, I am ready to be of it. Let but any man ſhew me any Book in the world, the doctrines whereof have the ſeal of ſuch miracles as the doctrine of the Scriptures hath; a Book which contains the heads of our duty ſo perfectly, and without the mixture of any thing that is unreaſonable, or vicious, or any ways unworthy of God; that commands us every thing in reaſon neceſſary to be done, and abridgeth us of no lawfull pleaſure without offering us abundant recompence for our preſent ſelf-denial; a Book the rules whreof, if they were practic'd, would make men more pious and devout, more holy and ſober, more juſt and fair in their dealings, better friends and better neighbours, better magiſtrates and better ſubjects and better in all relations, and which does offer to the underſtanding of men more powerfull arguments to perſwade them to be all this; let any man, I ſay, ſhew me ſuch a Book, and

I will

I will lay aſide the Scripture and preach out of *that.*

And do we not all profeſs to be of this excellent Religion, and to ſtudy and believe this holy Book of the Scriptures? But alas! who will believe that we do ſo, that ſhall look upon the actions and conſider the lives of the greateſt part of Chriſtians? How groſly and openly do many of us contradict the plain precepts of the Goſpel, by our ungodlineſs and worldly luſts; by living intemperately or unjuſtly, or prophanely in this preſent world? As if *the grace of God which brings ſalvation,* had never *appear'd* to us, as if we had never hear'd of Heaven or Hell, or believ'd not one word that the Scripture ſays concerning them, as if we were in no expectation *of the bleſſed hope and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt,* whom God hath *appointed to judge the world in righteouſneſs,* and who will beſtow mighty rewards upon thoſe who faithfully ſerve him, but will come *in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

Let us not then deceive our ſelves by pretending to this *excellent knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus our Lord,* if we do not frame

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our lives according to it. For though we *know theſe things* never ſo well, yet we are not *happy* unleſs *we do them:* Nay, we are but the more miſerable for knowing them if we do them not; Therefore it concerns every one of us to conſider ſeriouſly what we believe; and whether our belief of the Chriſtian Religion have its due effect upon our lives. If not, all the Precepts and Promiſes and Threatnings of the Goſpel will riſe up in judgment againſt us, and the Articles of our Faith will be ſo many Articles of Accuſation, and the great weight of our charge will be this that we did not obey that Goſpel which we profeſs'd to believe, that we made confeſſion of the Chriſtian Faith but liv'd like Heathens. Not to believe the Chriſtian Religion, after ſo great evidence and confirmation as God hath given to it, is very unreaſonable; but to believe it to be true, and yet to live as if it were falſe, is the greateſt repugnancy and contradiction that can be. He that does not believe Chriſtianity, either hath, or thinks he hath ſome reaſon for withholding his aſſent from it. But he that believes it, and yet lives contrary to it, knows that he hath no reaſon for what he does, and is convinc'd that he ought

ought to do otherwiſe: And he is a miſerable man indeed that does thoſe things for the doing of which he continually ſtands condemn'd by his own mind, and accordingly God will deal more ſeverely with ſuch perſons. He will pardon a thouſand defects in our underſtandings, if they do not proceed from groſs careleſneſs and neglect of our ſelves; but the faults of our wills have no excuſe, becauſe we knew to do better and were convinc'd in our minds that we ought not to have done ſo.

Doſt thou believe that *the wrath of God is reveal'd from Heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men*, and doſt thou ſtill allow thy ſelf *in ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*? Art thou convinc'd that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord*, and doſt thou ſtill perſiſt in a wicked courſe? Art thou fully perſwaded that *no whoremonger, nor adulterer, nor covetous, nor unrighteous perſon ſhall have any inheritance in the Kingdom of God and Chriſt*, and doſt thou for all that continue to practiſe theſe vices? What canſt thou ſay (*man*) why it ſhould not be to thee according to thy faith? If it ſo fall out that thou art miſerable and undone for ever, thou haſt no reaſon to be ſurpriz'd

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as if ſome unexpected thing had happen'd to thee. It is but with thee juſt as thou believ'dſt it would be when thou didſt theſe things. For how couldſt thou expect that God ſhould accept of thy good belief when thou didſt ſo notoriouſly contradict it by a bad life? How couldſt thou look for other but that God ſhould condemn thee for the doing of thoſe things for which thine own Conſcience did condemn thee all the while thou waſt doing of them; When we come into the other world there is no conſideration that will ſting our conſciences more cruelly than this, that we did wickedly when we knew to have done better, and choſe to make our ſelves miſerable when we underſtood the way to have been happy. To conclude, we Chriſtians have certainly the beſt and the holieſt, the wiſeſt and moſt reaſonable Religion in the world; but then we are in the worſt condition of all mankind, if the beſt Religion in the world do not make us good.

1 JOHN 5. 3.

——And his commandments are not grievous.

ONE of the great prejudices which men have entertain'd againſt the Chriſtian Religion is this, that it lays upon men *heavy burdens and grievous to be born*, that the Laws of it are very ſtrict and ſevere, difficult to be kept and yet dangerous to be broken; That it requires us to govern and keep under our paſſions, and to contradict many times our ſtrongeſt inclinations and deſires, *to cut off our right hand* and *to pluck out our right eye*, to *love our enemies*, to *bleſs them that curſe us*, to *do good to them that hate us* and to *pray for them that deſpitefully uſe us and perſecute us*; to forgive the greateſt injuries

that are done to us, and to make reparation for the leaſt that we do to others; to be contented with our condition, patient under ſufferings, and ready to ſacrifice our deareſt intereſts in this world, and even our very lives, in the cauſe of God and Religion: All theſe ſeem to be *hard ſayings* and *grievous commandments.*

For the removal of this prejudice I have choſen theſe words of the Apoſtle, which expreſly tells us the contrary, that *the commandments of God are not grievous.*

And though this be a great truth if it be impartially conſider'd, yet it is alſo a great paradox to men of corrupt minds and vicious practices, who are prejudic'd againſt Religion and the holy Laws of God by their intereſt and their luſts. This ſeems a ſtrange *propoſition* to thoſe who look upon Religion at a diſtance and never try'd the experiment of a holy life, who meaſure the Laws of God not by the intrinſecal goodneſs and equity of them, but by the reluctancy and oppoſition which they find in their own hearts againſt them.

Upon this account it will be requiſite to take ſome pains to ſatisfie the reaſon of men concerning this truth and if it be poſ-

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ſible to make it ſo evident that thoſe who are unwilling to own it may yet be aſham'd to deny it. And methinks I have this peculiar advantage in the argument I have now undertaken that every reaſonable man cannot chuſe but wiſh me ſucceſs in this attempt, becauſe I undertake the proof of that which it is every man's intereſt that it ſhould be true: And if I can make it out, this pretence againſt Religion will not onely be baffled but we ſhall gain a new and forcible argument to perſwade men over to it.

Now the eaſineſs or difficulty of the obſervation of any Laws or commands depends chiefly upon theſe *three* things.

Firſt, Upon the Nature of the Laws themſelves and their ſuitableneſs or unſuitableneſs to thoſe to whom they are given.

Secondly, Upon the ability or weakneſs of thoſe on whom theſe Laws are impos'd for the keeping of them. For eaſineſs and difficulty are relative terms and refer to ſome power, and a thing may be difficult to a weak man which yet may be eaſie to the ſame perſon when aſſiſted with a greater ſtrength.

Thirdly, Upon the encouragement that

is given to the obſervation of them. For the propoſal of great rewards does very much qualifie and allay the difficulty of any undertaking.

Now if I can make theſe three things evident: 1. That the Laws of God are reaſonable, that is, ſuitable to our nature and advantageous to our intereſt. 2. That we are not deſtitute of ſufficient power and ability for the performance of them. And, 3. That we have the greateſt encouragements to this purpoſe: Then have we all imaginable reaſon to aſſent to the truth of this Propoſition that *the commandments of God are not grievous.*

I. The Laws of God are reaſonable, that is, ſuitable to our nature and advantageous to our intereſt. 'Tis true God hath a ſoveraign right over us as we are his creatures, and by virtue of this right he might without injuſtice have impos'd difficult tasks upon us and have requir'd hard things at our hands. But in making Laws for us he hath not made uſe of this right. He hath commanded us nothing in the Goſpel that is either unſuitable to our reaſon, or prejudicial to our intereſt; nay, nothing that is ſevere and againſt the grain of our nature, but when either the apparent

rent neceſſity of our intereſt does require it, or an extraordinary reward is promis'd to our obedience. *He hath ſhew'd thee, O man what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* This is the ſum of the natural Law, that we ſhould behave our ſelves reverently and obediently towards the Divine Majeſty, and juſtly and charitably towards men; and that in order to the fitting of us for the better diſcharge of theſe duties, we ſhould govern our ſelves in the uſe of ſenſual delights with temperance and moderation. And if we go over the Laws of Chriſtianity, we ſhall find that, excepting a very few particulars, they enjoyn the very ſame things; onely they have made our duty more clear and certain. But this I have had occaſion to make out largely in the foregoing *diſcourſe*, and therefore I ſhall ſay the leſs to it now.

As to the ſeveral parts of God's worſhip and ſervice, *prayer* and *thankſgiving*, *hearing* and *reading* the *word of God*, and *receiving* of the *Sacrament*; theſe are all no leſs for our own comfort and advantage than for the honour of God and Religion. And there is nothing of difficulty

or trouble in the external performance of them, but what hypocriſie can make tolerable to it ſelf: And certainly they muſt be not onely much more eaſie, but even delightfull, when they are directed by our underſtandings, and accompanied with our hearts and affections.

As for thoſe Laws of Religion which concern our duty to our ſelves, as *temperance* and *chaſtity*; or to others, as the ſeveral branches of *juſtice* and *charity*, comprehended in thoſe general rules, *of loving our neighbour as our ſelves*, and *of doing to others as we would have them to do to us*: There is nothing in all theſe Laws but what is moſt reaſonable and fit to be done by us, nothing but what if we were to conſult our own intereſt and happineſs, and did rightly underſtand our ſelves, we would chuſe for our ſelves; nothing but what is eaſie to be underſtood, and as eaſie to be practis'd by an honeſt and a willing mind.

Now the practice of all theſe is ſuitable to our nature, and agreeable to the frame of our underſtandings; proper to our condition and circumſtances in this world, and preparatory to our happineſs in the next. And no man's reaſon did ever dictate to him the contrary of any of theſe; that it is

fit

fit for a Creature not to love God, to be undutifull to his great Soveraign, and ungratefull to his beſt benefactor; that it is reaſonable for a man to debauch himſelf by intemperance and brutiſh ſenſuality; to hate, defraud and oppreſs other men. Our very natural reaſon, if we will but liſten to the dictates of it, is an enemy to all theſe ſins and a law againſt all theſe vices.

And as the practice of all piety and vertue is agreeable to our reaſon, ſo is it likewiſe for the intereſt of mankind; both of private perſons, and of publick Societies, as I have already ſhown. Some vertues plainly tend to the preſervation of our health, others to the improvement and ſecurity of our eſtates, all to the peace and quiet of our minds; and which is ſomewhat more ſtrange, to the advancement of our eſteem and reputation; for though the world be generally bad, and men are apt to approve nothing ſo much as what they do themſelves; yet, I know not how it comes to paſs, men are commonly ſo juſt to vertue and goodneſs, as to praiſe it in others even when they do not practiſe it themſelves.

And as for thoſe precepts of Chriſtianity which ſeem to be moſt harſh and difficult

cult at first appearance, (as *repentance* and *restitution*, *mortification* of our *lusts* and *passions*, *humility*, *patience* and *contentedness* with our condition, and *resignation* of our selves to the will of God; *forgiving and loving our enemies*, and *self-denial* for the cause of God and Religion) if we look well into them and consider throughly the nature and tendency of them, even these will appear to be both reasonable in themselves, and upon one account or other really for our advantage.

What more reasonable than *repentance*, than that a man when he hath done amiss and contrary to his duty should be heartily sorry for it, and resolve to do so no more? And how grievous soever it be, it is necessary, being the onely way to pardon and peace. And in case our offence against God hath been complicated with injury to men, it is but reasonable we should make *restitution* as far as we are able, according to the nature of the injury. For without this our repentance is not real, because we have not done what we can to undo our fault as much as we can, or at least to hinder the injurious consequences of it from proceeding any farther: Nor can any man be judg'd

to

to be truly ſorry for his ſin that retains the profit and advantages of it to himſelf. Beſides, that till reparation be made to the utmoſt of our power we can have no peace in our own conſciences, nor any well-grounded hopes of forgiveneſs from God.

Mortification of our luſts and paſſions, though, like *repentance*, it have ſomething in it that is troubleſome, yet nothing that is unreaſonable, or really to our prejudice. If we give way to our Paſſions, we do but gratifie our ſelves for the preſent in order to our future diſquiet; but if we reſiſt and conquer them, we lay the foundation of perpetual peace and tranquillity in our minds. If we govern our ſelves in the uſe of ſenſual delights by the Laws of God and reaſon, we ſhall find our ſelves more at eaſe than if we ſhould let looſe the reins to our appetites and luſts. For the more we gratifie our luſts the more craving they will be, and the more impatient of denial. *Creſcit indulgens ſibi dirus hydrops*, every luſt is a kind of hydropick diſtemper, and the more we drink the more we ſhall thirſt. So that by retrenching our inordinate deſires we do not rob our ſelves of any true pleaſure, but onely prevent the pain and trouble of farther diſſatisfaction.

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Humility, though it may ſeem to expoſe a man to ſome contempt, yet it is truly the readieſt way to honour: as on the contrary, *pride* is a moſt improper and abſurd means for the accompliſhing of the end it aims at. All other vices do in ſome meaſure attain their end; covetouſneſs does uſually raiſe an eſtate, and ambitious endeavours do often advance men to high places; but pride and inſolence and contempt of others do infallibly defeat their own deſign. They aim at reſpect and eſteem but never attain it, for all mankind do naturally hate and ſlight a proud man.

What more reaſonable than *patience* and *contentedneſs*, and that we ſhould in all things *reſign* up our ſelves to the will of God, who loves us as well as we do our ſelves, and knows what is good for us better than we do our ſelves? this certainly is the beſt way to prevent anxiety and perplexity of mind, and to make the worſt condition as tolerable as it can be, and much more eaſie than it would be otherwiſe.

As for that peculiar *Law* of Chriſtianity which forbids *revenge*, and commands us to *forgive injuries* and to *love our enemies*, no man can think it grievous who conſiders the pleaſure and ſweetneſs of love and the glorious victory of overcoming

coming evil with good, and then compares theſe with the reſtleſs torment and perpetual tumults of a malicious and revengefull ſpirit.

And laſtly, *Self-denyal for the cauſe of God and Religion*; this is neither unreaſonable nor to our diſadvantage. If we conſider our infinite obligations to God, we have no reaſon to think much to ſacrifice to him our deareſt intereſts in this world; eſpecially if we conſider withall, how diſproportionably great the reward of our ſufferings ſhall be in another world. Beſides that the intereſt of Religion is of ſo great concernment to the happineſs of mankind, that every man is bound for that reaſon to aſſert the truth of it with the hazard of any thing that is moſt valuable to him in this world.

II. We are not deſtitute of ſufficient power and ſtrength for the performing of God's commands. Had God given us Laws but no power to keep them, his commandments would then indeed have been grievous. 'Tis true we have contracted a great deal of weakneſs and impotency by our wilfull degeneracy from goodneſs, but that grace which the Goſpel offers to us for our aſſiſtance is ſufficient for us. And this ſeems to be the particular

ticular reaſon why the Apoſtle ſays here in the *Text* that *his commandments are not grievous*, becauſe he offers us an aſſiſtance proportionable to the difficulty of his commands, and the neceſſity of our condition: for it follows immediately after the *Text*, *for whoſoever is born of God, overcometh the world.* Therefore the *commandments* of God *are not grievous*, becauſe every Child of God, *that is*, every Chriſtian is endued with a power whereby he is enabled to reſiſt and conquer the temptations of the world. The ſame Apoſtle elſewhere encourages Chriſtians upon the ſame conſideration, *greater is*
1 Joh. 4.4. *he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* Though we be encompaſs'd with many and potent enemies who make it their buſineſs to tempt and to deter us from our duty, yet our caſe is not hard ſo long as we have a greater ſtrength on our ſide: And this the Apoſtle tells us is the caſe of every Chriſtian, *greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* Are there legions of Devils who are continually deſigning and working our ruine? there are alſo myriads of good Angels who are more chearfull and officious to do us good. For I doubt not, but as thoſe who are bent to do wickedly will never want

want tempters to urge them on and to puſh them forward in an evil courſe; ſo on the other hand, thoſe who apply themſelves ſeriouſly to the buſineſs of Religion, and yield themſelves tractable to good motions, will find the good ſpirit of God more ready and active to encourage them than the Devil can be to pull them back; unleſs we think that God hath given a greater power and a larger commiſſion to the Devil to do men miſchief, than to his holy Spirit and his holy Angels for our aſſiſtance and encouragement. But then we are to underſtand that this aſſiſtance is onely offer'd to men, and not forc'd upon them whether they will or no. For if we beg God's grace but neglect to make uſe of it, if we implore his aſſiſtance for the mortifying of our luſts but will not contribute our own endeavours, God will withdraw his grace and take away his holy Spirit from us. Nay, if after we have begun well we do notoriouſly ſlacken our endeavours, we forfeit the Divine aſſiſtance: If when by God's grace we have in a good meaſure conquer'd the firſt difficulties of Religion, and gain'd ſome habitual ſtrength againſt ſin; if after this we grow careleſs and remiſs, and neglect our guard, and lay our ſelves open to temptations

tions, God's Spirit will not always ſtrive with us: Notwithſtanding all the promiſes of the Goſpel and the mighty aſſiſtances there offer'd to us, if we love any luſt, and will with *Sampſon* lay our head in *Dalilah*'s lap, we ſhall be inſenſibly robb'd *of our ſtrength and become like other men.*

III. We have the greateſt encouragement to the obſervance of God's commands. Two things make any courſe of life eaſie; preſent pleaſure, and the aſſurance of a future reward. Religion gives part of its reward in hand, the preſent comfort and ſatisfaction of having done our duty; and for the reſt, it offers us the beſt ſecurity that Heaven can give. Now theſe two muſt needs make our duty very eaſie; a conſiderable reward in hand, and not onely the hopes but the aſſurance of a far greater recompence hereafter.

1. Preſent peace and ſatisfaction of mind, and unexpreſſible joy and pleaſure flowing from the teſtimony of a good conſcience. This is preſent payment, beſides that it is the earneſt of a future and greater happineſs. And this does naturally ſpring up in the mind of a good man; *great peace*

peace have they that love thy Law, and nothing ſhall offend them. All Acts of piety and vertue are not onely delightfull for the preſent, but they leave peace and contentment behind them: a peace that no outward violence can interrupt or take from us. The pleaſures of a holy life have moreover this peculiar advantage of all worldly joys, that we ſhall never be weary of them; we cannot be cloy'd by the frequent repetition of theſe pleaſures, nor by the long enjoyment of them. I know that ſome vices pretend to bring great pleaſure along with them, and that the delights of a ſenſual and voluptuous life make a glorious ſhow and are attended with much pomp and noiſe, like the ſports of children and fools which are loud and clamorous; or, as *Solomon* elegantly compares them, *like the crackling of thorns under a pot*, which makes a little noiſe and a ſudden blaze that is preſently over. But the ſerious and the manly pleaſures, the ſolid and ſubſtantial joys, are onely to be found in the ways of Religion and Vertue. The moſt ſenſual man that ever was in the world never felt his heart touch'd with ſo delicious and laſting a pleaſure as that is which ſprings from a clear conſcience, and a mind fully ſatisfied with its own actions.

2. But the great encouragement of all is the aſſurance of a future reward. The firm perſwaſion whereof is enough to raiſe us above any thing in this world, and to animate us with courage and reſolution againſt the greateſt difficulties. So the *Apoſtle* reaſons; *His commandments are not grievous; For whatſoever is born of God, overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith.* The belief of a future happineſs and glory was that which made the primitive Chriſtians ſo victorious over the world, and gave them the courage to reſiſt all the pleaſures and terrors of ſenſe. It cannot be deny'd, but that a religious courſe of life is liable to be incumbred with many difficulties which are naturally grievous to fleſh and bloud. But a Chriſtian is able to comfort himſelf under all theſe with the thoughts of his end, which is *everlaſting life*. He conſiders the goodneſs of God which he believes would not deny him the free enjoyment of the things of this world, were it not that he hath ſuch joys and pleaſures in ſtore for him as will abundantly recompence his preſent ſelf-denial and ſufferings.

Let us now put both theſe together, the *pleaſures* of Religion and the *rewards* of it, and they cannot but appear to be a mighty

mighty encouragement. With what pleaſures does a man that lives a holy and a vertuous life deſpiſe the pleaſures of ſin, and notwithſtanding all the allurements of ſenſe perſiſt reſolutely in his courſe? And how is ſuch a man confirm'd in his purpoſe and animated in his holy reſolution, when he finds that God and his own conſcience do applaud his choice; when all along in the courſe of Religion and a vertuous life, in his conflicts with ſin and reſiſtance of temptations, he hath for his preſent reward the two great pleaſures of innocence and of victory, and for his future encouragement the joyfull hopes of a Crown and a Kingdom? A recompence ſo great, as is ſufficient to make a lame man walk, enough to make any one willing to offer violence to his ſtrongeſt paſſions and inclinations. A man would be content to ſtrive with himſelf and to conflict with great difficulties, in hopes of a mighty reward. What poor man would not cheerfully carry a great burthen of gold and ſilver, that were aſſur'd to have the greateſt ſhare of it for his pains, and thereby to be made a man for ever? Whatever difficulties Religion is attended withall they are all ſweeten'd and made eaſy by the propoſal of a great and eternal reward.

But are there no difficulties then in Religion? Is every thing ſo plain and eaſie? Are all the ways of vertue ſo ſmooth and even as we have here repreſented them? Hath not
Mat. 7. 14. our *Saviour* told us, that *ſtrait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life, and*
Act. 14. 22. *few there be that find it?* Does not the *Apoſtle* ſay, *that through much tribulation we muſt*
2 Tim. 3. 12. *enter into the Kingdom of God?* And, *that all that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus ſhall ſuffer perſecution?* And does not the *Scripture* every where ſpeak of *ſtriving*, and *wreſtling*, and *running*, and *fighting*; of *labouring*, and *watching*, and *giving all diligence?* And is there nothing grievous in all this?

This is a very material objection, and therefore I ſhall be the more carefull to give a ſatisfactory anſwer to it. And that I may do it the more diſtinctly be pleas'd to conſider theſe *ſix* things. 1. That the ſuffering of perſecution for Religion is an extraordinary caſe, which did chiefly concern the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity. 2. That this diſcourſe concerning the eaſineſs of God's commands does all along ſuppoſe and acknowledge the difficulties of the entrance upon a Religious courſe. 3. Nor is there any reaſon it ſhould exclude our after care and diligence. 4. All the difficulties of Religion are very much mitigated and

and allayed by hope and by love. 5. There is incomparably more difficulty and trouble in the ways of ſin and vice than in the ways of Religion and Vertue. 6. If we do but put vertue and vice, a religious and a wicked courſe of life in equal circumſtances; if we will but ſuppoſe a man as much accuſtom'd and inur'd to the one as he has been to the other, then I ſhall not doubt to pronounce that the advantages of eaſe and pleaſure will be found to be on the ſide of Religion.

I. The ſuffering of perſecution for Religion is an extraordinary caſe, and did chiefly concern the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity. And therefore the general ſayings of our Saviour and his Apoſtles concerning the perſecuted ſtate of Chriſtians are to be limited, as doubtleſs they were intended, principally to thoſe firſt times and by no means to be equally extended to all Ages of the Church. At firſt indeed whoever embrac'd the profeſſion of Chriſtianity did thereby expoſe themſelves to all the ſufferings which the power and malice of the world could afflict them withall: But ſince *the Kingdoms of the Earth became the Kingdoms of the Lord and of his Chriſt*, and the Governours of the world began to be Patrons of the Church, 'tis ſo far from being univerſally

true that every Christian hath suffer'd the violence of persecution, that it hath been a rare case and happen'd onely in some few ages, and to some persons. So that this is accidental to a state of Religion, and therefore ought not to be reckon'd among the ordinary difficulties of it. And when it happens God gives extraordinary supports, and promises mighty rewards to make it tolerable.

II. This discourse concerning the easiness of God's commands does all along suppose and acknowledge the difficulties of the first entrance upon a religious course, except onely in those persons who have had the happiness to be train'd up to Religion by the easie and insensible degrees of a pious and vertuous education. These indeed are freed from a great deal of pains and difficulty which others who are reclaim'd from a bad course of life must expect to undergo. They are in a great measure excused from the pangs of the new birth, from the pains of a sudden and violent change, from the terrours of an affrighted mind, and from the deep and piercing sorrows of a more solemn repentance. Whereas those who have lived wickedly before must look to meet with a great deal more trouble, because they are put upon changing the whole course

of

of their life at once, and muſt contend with inveterate habits, and offer no ſmall violence to themſelves in plucking up thoſe vices which have been rooted in them by long cuſtome and continuance. This indeed is grievous and muſt needs be ſenſibly painfull, like the *plucking out of a right eye*, or the *cutting off a right hand:* For in this caſe a man muſt ſtrive againſt the very bent and inclination of his ſtrongeſt appetites, againſt the tyranny of cuſtome and the mighty power of a ſecond nature. But this is no juſt reflection upon religion, becauſe this does not proceed from the nature of God's laws but from an accidental indiſpoſition in our ſelves, which Religion is apt to remove: And if we will but allow ſome time of trouble and uneaſineſs for the cure, when that is once wrought the commands of God will be more eaſy and delightfull to us than ever our ſins and luſts were.

III. Nor does this exclude our after care and diligence. For when the *Apoſtle* ſays that *the commandments of God are not grievous*, he does by no means intend to inſinuate that they are calculated for ſlothfull and lazy perſons, that they are ſo eaſy as to require no induſtry and endeavour on our part; he onely aims to prevent a tacit objection which lies at the bot-

tom of many mens hearts, as if Religion were a moſt grievous and intolerable burthen, and there were more trouble and leſs pleaſure in it than in any other action of humane life. This he utterly denies, but does not hereby intend to exclude ſuch diligence and induſtry as men uſe about other matters. And if I ſhould tell you, that the buſineſs of Religion does not require a very vigorous proſecution and great earneſtneſs of endeavour, I ſhould ſpeak quite beſides the holy *Scriptures* which ſo frequently command *ſeeking* and *ſtriving* and *labouring*, beſides many other ſuch *phraſes* that import diligence and earneſtneſs. And indeed it were unfit that ſo excellent and glorious a reward as the *Goſpel* promiſes ſhould ſtoop down like fruit upon a full-laden bough to be pluck'd by every idle and wanton hand; that Heaven ſhould be proſtituted to the lazy deſires and faint wiſhes, to the cheap and ordinary endeavours of ſloathfull men. God will not ſo much diſparage eternal life and happineſs, as to beſtow it upon thoſe who have conceiv'd ſo low an opinion of it as not to think it worth the labouring for. And ſurely this is ſufficient to recommend Religion to any conſiderate man, if the advantages of it be much greater than of any worldly deſign that we can propound

pound to our ſelves, and the difficulties of it not greater. If the ſame ſerioufneſs and induſtry of endeavour, which men commonly uſe to raiſe a fortune and advance themſelves in the world, will ſerve to make a man a good man and to bring him to Heaven, what reaſon hath any man to complain of the hard terms of Religion? And I think I may truly ſay that uſually leſs than this does it. For God conſiders our condition in this world and the preſſing neceſſities of this life, that we are fleſh as well as ſpirit and that we have great need of theſe things, and therefore he allows us to be very ſedulous and induſtrious about them. However this I am ſure of, that if men would be as ſerious to ſave their immortal ſouls as they are to ſupport theſe dying bodies; if they would but provide for eternity with the ſame ſollicitude and real care as they do for this life; if they would but ſeek Heaven with the ſame ardour of affection and vigour of proſecution as they ſeek earthly things; if they would but love God as much as many men do the World, and mind godlineſs as much as men uſually do gain; if they would but go to Church with as good a will as men ordinarily do to their Markets and Fairs, and be in as good earneſt at their devotions as men commonly are in driving

ving a bargain; if they would but endure ſome troubles and inconveniences in the ways of Religion with the ſame patience and conſtancy as they can do ſtorms, and foul ways, and miſchances, when they are travelling about their worldly occaſions; If they would but avoid bad company as men uſe to do cheaters, and reject the temptations of the Devil and the world as they would do the kind words and inſinuations of a man whom they verily believe to have a deſign to over-reach them; I am confident that ſuch a one could not fail of Heaven, and would be much ſurer of it upon theſe terms, than any man that doth all the other things could be of getting an eſtate or of attaining any thing in this world.

And cannot every man do thus much? All that I have ſaid ſignifies no more but that men ſhould uſe their ſincere endeavours, and this ſurely every man can do. For to uſe our ſincere endeavours is nothing elſe but to do as much as we can, and it is non-ſenſe for any man to deny that he can do as much as he can. And if we would do thus much we are ſure of God's grace and aſſiſtance, which is never wanting to the ſincere endeavours of men. But men expect that Religion ſhould coſt them no pains, that happineſs ſhould drop into their laps

laps without any deſign and endeavour on their part, and that after they have done what they pleaſe while they live God ſhould ſnatch them up to Heaven when they die. But though *the commandments of God be not grievous*, yet it is fit to let men know that they are not thus eaſie.

IV. All the difficulties of Religion are very much allay'd and ſweeten'd by *hope* and by *love*. By the *hopes* of a mighty reward; ſo great, as is enough to raiſe us above our ſelves, and to make us break through all difficulties and diſcouragements: And by the *love* of God, who hath taken all imaginable ways to endear himſelf to us. He gave us our beings, and when we were fallen from that happineſs to which at firſt we were deſign'd, he was pleaſed to reſtore us to a new capacity of it by ſending his onely Son into the world to die for us. So that if we have any ſenſe of kindneſs we cannot but love Him who hath done ſo much to oblige us, and if we love him entirely nothing that he commands will be grievous to us; nay, ſo far from that, that the greateſt pleaſure we are capable of will be to pleaſe him. For nothing is difficult to love. It will make a man deny himſelf and croſs his own inclinations to pleaſure them whom he loves. It is a paſſion of a ſtrange

ſtrange power where it reigns, and will cauſe a man to ſubmit to thoſe things with delight which in other circumſtances would ſeem grievous to him. *Jacob* ſerv'd for *Rachel ſeven years*, and after that *ſeven years more; and they ſeemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.* Did but the love of God rule in our hearts, and had we as real an affection for him as ſome men have for their friends, there are no ſuch difficulties in Religion but what love would conquer, and the ſevereſt parts of it would become eaſie when they were once undertaken by a willing mind.

V. There is incomparably more trouble in the ways of ſin and vice than in thoſe of Religion and Vertue. Every notorious ſin is naturally attended with ſome inconvenience of harm, or danger, or diſgrace; which the ſinner ſeldom conſiders till the ſin be committed, and then he is in a labyrinth, and in ſeeking the way out of a preſent inconvenience he intangles himſelf in more. He is glad to make uſe of indirect arts, and laborious crafts, to avoid the conſequence of his faults; and many times is fain to cover one ſin with another, and the more he ſtrives to diſentangle himſelf the more is he *ſnar'd in the work of his own hands.* Into what perplexities did *David*'s ſin bring him? ſuch as by

by all his power and arts he could not free himſelf from: He was glad to commit a greater crime to avoid the ſhame of a leſs, and could find no other way to conceal his adultery but by plunging himſelf into the guilt of murther. And thus it is proportionably in all other vices. The ways of ſin are *crooked paths*, full of windings and turnings; but *the way of holineſs* and vertue is a *high way*, and lies ſo plain before us that *wayfaring men, though fools ſhall not err therein.* Isa. 35. 8. There needs no skill to keep a mans ſelf true and honeſt, if we will but reſolve to deal juſtly and to *ſpeak the truth to our neighbour* nothing in the whole world is eaſier: For there is nothing of artifice and reach required to enable a man to ſpeak as he thinks, and to do to others as he would be dealt withall himſelf.

And as the ways of ſin are full of intricacy and perplexities, ſo likewiſe of trouble and diſquiet. There is no man that wilfully commits any ſin but his conſcience ſmites him for it, and his guilty mind is frequently gall'd with the remembrance of it; but the reflection upon honeſt and vertuous actions hath nothing of regret and diſquiet in it. No man's conſcience ever troubled him for not being honeſt, no man's reaſon ever challeng'd him for not being drunk,

drunk, no man ever broke his ſleep or was haunted with fears of divine vengeance becauſe he was conſcious to himſelf that he had *liv'd ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in the world.* But with the ungodly it is not ſo. There is no man that is knowingly wicked but he is guilty to himſelf, and there is no man that carries guilt about him but he hath received a ſting into his ſoul which makes him reſtleſs, ſo that he can never have any perfect eaſe and pleaſure in his mind.

I might have deſcended to particular Inſtances, and have ſhewn how much more troubleſome the practice of every ſin and vice is than the exerciſe of the contrary grace and vertue; but that would be too large a ſubject to be brought within the limits of a ſingle diſcourſe.

VI. Let but vertue and vice, a religious and wicked courſe of life be put in equal circumſtances, do but ſuppoſe a man to be as much accuſtom'd and inur'd to the one as he has been to the other, and then I doubt not but the advantages of eaſe and pleaſure, will be found to be on the ſide of Religion: and if we do not put the caſe thus we make an unequal compariſon. For there is no man but when he firſt begins a wicked courſe feels a great deal of regret in his mind, the terrours of his conſcience and the fears of damna-

damnation are very troubleſom to him. It is poſſible that by degrees a man may harden his conſcience, and by a long cuſtome of ſinning may in a great meaſure wear off that tender ſenſe of good and evil which makes ſin ſo uneaſie: But then if in the practice of a holy life a man may by the ſame degrees arrive to far greater peace and tranquillity of mind than ever any wicked man found in a ſinfull courſe, if by cuſtome vertue will come to be more pleaſant than ever vice was, then the advantage is plainly on the ſide of Religion. And this is truly the caſe. It is troubleſome at firſt for a man to begin any new courſe, and to do contrary to what he hath been accuſtom'd to; but let a man but habituate himſelf to a religious and vertuous life, and the trouble will go off by degrees and unſpeakable pleaſure ſucceed in the room of it. It is an excellent rule which *Pythagoras* gave to his Scholars, *optimum vitæ genus eligito, nam conſuetudo faciet jucundiſſimum; pitch upon the beſt courſe of life*, reſolve always to do that which is moſt reaſonable and vertuous, *and cuſtom will ſoon render it the moſt eaſie.* There is nothing of difficulty in a good life but what may be conquer'd by cuſtome as well as the difficulties of any other courſe, and when a man is once us'd to it the pleaſure of it will be greater than of any other courſe. Let

Let no man then decline or forſake Religion for the pretended difficulties of it, and lay aſide all cares of God's commandments upon this ſuggeſtion that they are impoſſible to be kept. For you ſee they are not only poſſible but eaſie. And thoſe who upon pretence of the trouble and difficulties of Religion abandon themſelves to a wicked courſe of life may eaſily be convinc'd that they take more pains to make themſelves miſerable than would ſerve to bring them to happineſs. There is no man that is a ſervant of ſin, and a ſlave to any baſe luſt, but might if he pleas'd get to Heaven with leſs trouble than he goes to Hell.

So that upon conſideration of the whole matter, there is no reaſon why any man ſhould be deterr'd from a holy and vertuous life for fear of the labour and pains of it. Becauſe every one that is wicked takes more pains in another way, and is more induſtrious onely to a worſe purpoſe. Now he that can travel in deep and foul ways ought not to ſay that he cannot walk in fair. He that ventures to run upon a precipice, when every ſtep he takes is with danger of his life and his ſoul, ought not to pretend any thing againſt the plain and ſafe paths of Religion, which will entertain us with pleaſure all along in the way and crown us with happineſs at the end.

2 TIM. 2. 19.

Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt, depart from iniquity.

THE whole verſe runs thus: *Nevertheleſs the foundation of God ſtandeth ſure, having this ſeal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: And, Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt depart from iniquity.*

In which words the Apoſtle declares to us the terms of the covenant between God and man. For the word θεμέλιος which is here tranſlated *foundation*, according to the uſual ſignification of it, is likewiſe (as learned men have obſerv'd) ſometimes uſed for an inſtrument of contract whereby two parties do oblige themſelves mutually to each other. And this notion of the word agrees very well with what follows concerning the *ſeal* affix'd to it, which is very ſuitable to a *Covenant* but

not at all to a *foundation.* 'Tis true indeed, as the learned *Grotius* hath obſerved, there uſed anciently to be inſcriptions on foundation-ſtones, and the word σφραγὶς which we render *ſeal* may likewiſe ſignifie an *inſcription*; and then the ſenſe will be very current thus, *The foundation of God ſtandeth ſure, having this* inſcription. But it is to be conſidered, that though σφραγὶς may ſignifie an *inſcription*, yet it is onely an *inſcription* upon a *ſeal* which hath no relation to a foundation, but is very proper to a covenant or mutual obligation. And accordingly the *ſeal* affixt to this *inſtrument*, or *covenant* between God and man is in alluſion to the cuſtom of thoſe countries ſaid to have an inſcription on both ſides agreeable to the condition of the perſons contracting. On God's part there is this *impreſs* or inſcription, *The Lord knoweth them that are his*, that is, God will own and reward thoſe that are faithfull to him: And on our part, *Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt, depart from iniquity.*

Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt, that is, that calls himſelf a Chriſtian. For to name the name of any one or to have his name call'd upon us does ac-

according to the uſe of this Phraſe among the *Hebrews*, ſignifie nothing elſe but to be denominated from him. Thus 'tis frequently uſed in the *Old* Teſtament, and ſometimes in the *New*, *Do they not blaſpheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?* that is, the name or title of Chriſtians; and that expreſſion, *if ye be reproached for the name of Chriſt*, is at the ſixteenth verſe varied, *if any man ſuffer as a Chriſtian.* So that to name the name of Chriſt is to call our ſelves Chriſtians. Jam. 2. 7. 1 Pet. 4. 14.

Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt depart from iniquity. The word ἀδικία is often taken ſtrictly for injuſtice or unrighteouſneſs, but ſometimes uſed more largely for ſin and wickedneſs in the general. And ſo it ſeems to be uſed here in the Text, becauſe there is no reaſon from the context to reſtrain it to any particular kind of ſin or vice, and becauſe Chriſtianity lays an equal obligation upon men to abſtain from all ſin. *Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt depart from iniquity*, that is, every Chriſtian obligeth himſelf by his profeſſion to renounce all ſin and to live a holy life.

In ſpeaking to this argument I ſhall do theſe two things.

1. Shew what obligation the profeſſion of Chriſtianity lays upon men to live holy lives.

2. Endeavour to perſwade thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians to anſwer this obligation.

I. What obligation the profeſſion of Chriſtianity lays upon men to live holy lives. He that calls himſelf a Chriſtian profeſſeth to entertain the Doctrine of Chriſt, to live in the imitation of his holy example, and to have ſolemnly engaged himſelf to all this. I ſhall ſpeak briefly to theſe, and then come to that which I principally intend, to perſwade men to live accordingly.

1. He that profeſſeth himſelf a Chriſtian profeſſeth to entertain the doctrine of Chriſt, to believe the whole Goſpel, to aſſent to all the articles of the Chriſtian faith, to all the precepts and promiſes and threatnings of the Goſpel. Now the great deſign, the proper intention of this doctrine is to take men off from ſin, and to direct and encourage them to a holy life. It teacheth us what we are to believe concerning God and Chriſt, not with any deſign to entertain our minds with

with the bare ſpeculation of thoſe truths but to better our lives. For every article of our faith is a proper argument againſt ſin, and a powerfull motive to obedience. The whole hiſtory of Chriſt's appearance in the world, all the diſcourſes and actions of his life, and the ſufferings of his death do all tend to this; the ultimate iſſue of all is the *deſtroying of ſin*; So St. *John* tells us, *for this purpoſe was the Son of God manifeſted that he might deſtroy the works of the devil.* But this is moſt expreſly and fully declar'd to us, *Tit.* 2. 11, 12, 13, 14. *The grace of God that bringeth ſalvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world; looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; who gave himſelf for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purifie unto himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works.*

1 Joh. 3. 8.

The *precepts* of the Goſpel do ſtrictly command holineſs, and that univerſal; the purity of our ſouls, and the chaſtity of our bodies; *to cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit; to abſtain from all kind of evil; to be holy in all manner of converſation.*

2 Cor. 7. 1. 1 Theſ. 5. 22. 1 Pet. 1. 15.

tion. They require us to endeavour after the higheſt degrees of holineſs that are attainable by us in this imperfect ſtate, *to*
Mat. 5.48. *be holy as he that hath called us is holy; to be perfect as our father which is in heaven is perfect.*

And all the *promiſes* of the Goſpel are ſo many encouragements to obedience and
2 Cor. 7.1. a holy life; *having therefore theſe promiſes, let us cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit and perfect holineſs in the fear of God.* We are told by St. *Peter* that theſe exceeding great and precious promiſes are given to us that by theſe *we might*
2 Pet. 1.4. *be partakers of a Divine nature, having eſcaped the pollution that is in the world through luſt*; and that we might *give all diligence to add to our faith vertue, and to vertue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance and patience and brotherly-kindneſs and charity.*

And the *threatnings* of the Goſpel are ſo many powerfull arguments againſt ſin.

Therefore the Apoſtle calls the *Goſpel*
Rom. 1. 16. 18. *the power of God unto ſalvation,* becauſe therein the *wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men.* So that if we call our ſelves Chriſtians we profeſs to embrace the holy

holy doctrine of the Chriſtian Religion which is perfectly oppoſite to all impiety and wickedneſs of life. We profeſs to be governed by thoſe laws which do ſtrictly enjoyn holineſs and vertue. We profeſs to be perſwaded that all the promiſes and threatnings of the Goſpel are true, which offer ſuch great and glorious rewards to obedience and threaten tranſgreſſion and diſobedience with ſuch dreadfull puniſhments. And if ſo, we are obliged both by our reaſon and our intereſt to live accordingly.

2. He that profeſſeth himſelf a Chriſtian profeſſeth to live in the imitation of Chriſt's example and to follow his ſteps *who did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* The Son of God came into the world not onely by his Doctrine to inſtruct us in the way to happineſs and by his death to make expiation of ſin, but by his life to be an example to us of holineſs and vertue. Therefore in Scripture we find ſeveral *Titles* given him which import his exemplarineſs, as of a *Prince* and a *Captain*, a *Maſter* and a *Guide*. Now if he be our pattern we ſhould endeavour to be like him, *to have the ſame mind that was in Chriſt Jeſus; to walk in love as he alſo hath loved us and given himſelf for us.*

We ſhould aſpire after the higheſt degree of holineſs, make it our conſtant and ſincere endeavour to pleaſe God and do his will and *to fulfill all righteouſneſs* as he did. Does any man profeſs himſelf a Chriſtian and yet abandons himſelf to intemperance and filthy luſts? is this like our Saviour? Are we cruel and unmercifull? is this like the High Prieſt of our profeſſion? Are we proud and paſſionate, malicious and revengefull? is this to be like-minded with Chriſt who was meek and lowly in Spirit, who prayed for his enemies and offer'd up his blood to God on the behalf of them that ſhed it? If we call our ſelves Chriſtians we profeſs to have the life of Chriſt continually before us, and to be always correcting and reforming our lives by that pattern.

3. He that calls himſelf a Chriſtian hath ſolemnly engaged himſelf to renounce all ſin and to live a holy life. By Baptiſm we have ſolemnly taken upon us the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and engaged our ſelves to renounce the Devil and all his works, and obediently to keep God's commandments. Anciently thoſe who were baptized put off their garments, which ſignified the putting off the body of ſin; and were immers'd and buried in the water,

ter, to repreſent their death of ſin; and then did riſe up again out of the water, to ſignifie their entrance upon a new life. And to theſe cuſtoms the Apoſtle alludes when he ſays, *How ſhall we that are dead to ſin live any longer therein; Know ye not, that ſo many of us as were baptized into Jeſus Chriſt were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him in baptiſm into death, that like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the dead by the glory of the Father even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life: For if we have been planted together in the likeneſs of his death we ſhall be alſo in the likeneſs of his reſurrection, knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him that the body of ſin might be deſtroyed, that henceforth we might not ſerve ſin.* So that by Baptiſm we profeſs to be entred into a new ſtate, and to be endued with a new nature; *to have put off the old man with his deeds*; to have quitted *our former converſation, which is corrupt according to deceitfull luſts*, and to be *renewed in the ſpirit of our minds*, and to have *put on the new man which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs.* And therefore Baptiſm is called the *putting on of Chriſt*; *As many of you as have been baptized into Chriſt, have put on Chriſt.* Now Rom. 6. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Gal. 3. 27.

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if we profeſs to have put on Chriſt we muſt quit and renounce our luſts, becauſe theſe are inconſiſtant, as appears by the oppoſition which the Apoſtle makes between them; *Put ye on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and make not proviſion for the fleſh to fulfill the luſts thereof.* Rom. 13. 14.

And as we did ſolemnly covenant with God to this purpoſe in Baptiſm, ſo we do ſolemnly renew this obligation ſo often as we receive the bleſſed Sacrament of Chriſt's Body and Blood. Therefore the cup in the Sacrament is called the *new Covenant in his Blood*, that is, this repreſents the ſhedding of Chriſt's blood by which rite the covenant between God and man is ratified. And as by this God doth confirm his promiſes to us, ſo we do oblige our ſelves to be faithfull and obedient to him, *and if we ſin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth*, that is, after we are become Chriſtians, *we account the blood of the Covenant a common thing*, that is, we make nothing of the ſolemneſt *rite* that ever was uſed in the world for confirmation of any covenant, the ſhedding of the blood of the ſon of God. And that this was always underſtood to be the meaning of this holy Sacrament, to renew our Covenant with

with God, and ſolemnly to confirm our reſolutions of a holy life is very plain from that account which *Pliny* * gives us of the worſhip of the Chriſtians in a Letter to *Trajan* the Emperour; in which he tells him *that they aſſembled early in the morning before day, to ſing a Hymn to Chriſt as God*; and then (ſaith he) they do *ſacramento ſe obſtringere, bind themſelves by a ſacrament or oath not to rob or ſteal or commit adultery, not to break their word or falſifie their truſt, and after they have eaten together they depart home.* Which is plainly an account of the Chriſtians celebrating of the holy Sacrament, which it ſeems was then look'd upon as an *oath* whereby Chriſtians did ſolemnly covenant and engage themſelves againſt all wickedneſs and vice.

* *Plin.* Epiſt. L. 10. Epiſt. 97.

Thus you ſee what obligation the profeſſion of Chriſtianity lays upon us to holineſs of life. From all which it is evident that the Goſpel requires ſomething on our part. For the Covenant between God and us is a mutual engagement, and as there are *bleſſings* promiſed on his part ſo there are *conditions* to be performed on ours. And if we live wicked and unholy lives, if we neglect our duty towards God we have no title at all to the

the bleſſings of this Covenant. The contrary doctrine to this hath been greedily entertained to the vaſt prejudice of Chriſtianity, as if in this new Covenant of the Goſpel God took all upon himſelf, and required nothing or as good as nothing, of us, that it would be a diſparagement to the freedom of God's grace to think he expects any thing from us. That the Goſpel is all promiſes and our part is onely to believe and embrace them, that is, to be confident that God will perform them if we can but think ſo, though we do nothing elſe; which is an eaſie condition to fools but the hardeſt in the world to a wiſe man, who if his ſalvation depended upon it could never perſwade himſelf to believe that the holy God without any reſpect at all to his repentance and amendment would beſtow upon him forgiveneſs of ſins and eternal life, onely becauſe he was confident that God would do ſo. As if any man could think that it were a thing ſo highly acceptable to God that men ſhould believe of him that he loves to diſpenſe his grace and mercy upon the moſt unfit and unreaſonable terms. A Covenant does neceſſarily imply a mutual obligation, and the Scripture plainly tells us what are the

the terms and conditions of this Covenant both on God's part and ours, namely, that he *will be our God* and we *ſhall be his people.* But he hath no-where ſaid that though we be not *his people* yet he will be *our God.* The *ſeal* of this Covenant hath two *inſcriptions* upon it; one on God's part, that he will *know them that are his*; and another on our part, that we ſhall *depart from iniquity.* But if we will not ſubmit to this condition God will not know us, but will bid us depart from him. So our Saviour tells us, *I will ſay unto them depart from me ye workers of iniquity, I know you not.* Mat. 7. 23. If we deal falſly in covenant with God and break looſe from all our engagements to him, we releaſe God from all the promiſes that he hath made to us. If we neglect to perform thoſe conditions upon which he hath ſuſpended the performance of his promiſes, we diſcharge the obligation on God's part, and he remains faithfull though he deny us that happineſs which he promiſed under thoſe conditions which we have neglected.

II. I come now to the *ſecond* thing propounded, and that is to perſwade thoſe who profeſs Chriſtianity to anſwer thoſe obli-

obligations to a holy life which their Religion lays upon them. We all call our ſelves Chriſtians, and would be very much offended at any man that ſhould deny us this title. But let us not cheat our ſelves with an empty and inſignificant name, but if we will call our ſelves Chriſtians let us fill up this great title, and make good our profeſſion by a ſuitable life and practice. And to perſwade us hereto, I will urge theſe three conſiderations.

1. The indecency of the contrary.
2. The great ſcandal of it to our bleſſed Saviour and his holy Religion, and
3. The infinite danger of it to our own ſouls.

1. Conſider how unbecoming it is for a man to live unſuitably to his profeſſion. If we call our ſelves Chriſtians we profeſs to entertain the doctrine of the Goſpel, to be taught and inſtructed by the beſt maſter, to be the diſciples of the higheſt and moſt perfect inſtitution that ever was in the world, to have embraced a Religion which contains the moſt exact rules for the conduct and government of our lives, which lays down the plaineſt precepts,

precepts, ſets before us the beſt patterns and examples of a holy life, and offers us the greateſt aſſiſtances and encouragements to this purpoſe. We profeſs to be furniſhed with the beſt arguments to excite us to holineſs and vertue, to be awed with the greateſt fears and animated with the beſt hopes of any men in the world.

Now whoever makes ſuch a profeſſion as this obligeth himſelf to live anſwerably, to do nothing that ſhall groſly contradict it. Nothing is more abſurd than for a man to act contrary to his profeſſion, to pretend to great matters and perform nothing of what he pretends to. Wiſe men will not be caught with pretences nor be impoſed upon with an empty profeſſion, but they will enquire into our lives and actions and by theſe they will make a judgment of us. They cannot ſee into our hearts nor pry into our underſtandings to diſcover what it is that we inwardly believe, they cannot diſcern thoſe ſecret and ſupernatural principles that we pretend to be acted by: But this they can do, they can examine our actions and behold our good or bad works, and try whether our lives be indeed anſwerable to our profeſſion and do really excell the lives

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of other men who do not pretend to ſuch great things. There are a great many ſagacious perſons who will eaſily find us out, will look under our mask, and ſee through all our fine pretenſions, and will quickly diſcern the abſurdity of telling the world that we believe one thing when we do the contrary.

If we profeſs to believe the Chriſtian Religion, we expoſe our ſelves to the ſcorn and contempt of every diſcerning man if we do not live up to it. With what face can any man continue in the practice of any known ſin that profeſſeth to believe the holy doctrine of the Goſpel which forbids all ſin under the higheſt and ſevereſt penalties? If we did but believe the hiſtory of the Goſpel as we do any ordinary credible ſtory, and did we but regard the Laws of Chriſtianity as we do the laws of the Land; were we but perſwaded, that fraud and oppreſſion, lying and perjury, intemperance and uncleanneſs, covetouſneſs and pride, malice and revenge, the neglect of God and Religion will bring men to hell as certainly as treaſon and felony will bring a man under the ſentence of the Law: Had we but the ſame awe and regard for the threatnings and promiſes of the Goſpel that we have

have for the frowns and ſmiles of thoſe who are in power and authority, even this would be effectual to keep us from ſin. And if the Goſpel have not this effect upon us it is an argument that we do not believe it.

'Tis to no purpoſe to go about to perſwade men that we do heartily entertain the doctrine of Chriſt, *that doctrine* which hath all the characters of piety and juſtice, of holineſs and vertue upon it; which obligeth men to *whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are chaſt, whatſoever things are lovely, and of good report*, if we have no regard to theſe things in our lives. He that would know what a man believes, let him attend rather to what he does than to what he talks. He that leads a wicked life makes a more credible and effectual profeſſion of infidelity than he who in words onely denies the Goſpel. It is the hardeſt thing in the world to imagine that *that* man believes Chriſtianity who by ungodlineſs and worldly luſts does deny and renounce it. If we profeſs our ſelves Chriſtians, it may juſtly be expected from us that we ſhould evidence this by our actions, that we ſhould live at another rate than the Heathens did,

that we who worſhip a holy and juſt God ſhould not allow our ſelves the liberty to ſin as thoſe did who worſhipped ſuch Gods as were examples of ſin and patrons of their vices. Thou who profeſſeſt thy ſelf a Chriſtian may'ſt not walk in the luſts of the fleſh and of uncleanneſs as thoſe did who worſhipped a luſtfull *Jupiter* and a wanton *Venus*. Thou may'ſt not be intemperate as thoſe were who worſhipped a drunken *Bacchus*. Thou may'ſt not be cruel and unmercifull as thoſe were who worſhipped a fierce *Saturn*: Nor may'ſt thou ſteal as thoſe did who worſhipped a thieviſh *Mercury*. Thou muſt remember that thou art a Chriſtian, and when thou art ready to debaſe thy ſelf to any vile luſt: conſider what title thou beareſt, by what name thou art called, whoſe diſciple thou art; and then ſay to thy ſelf, ſhall I allow my ſelf in any impiety or wickedneſs of life who pretend to be inſtructed by that grace of God which teaches men to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts? Shall I cheriſh any ſinfull paſſion who pretend to have mortified all theſe and to have *put off the old man with his deeds*?

It is not being gilded over with the external profeſſion of Chriſtianity that will avail

avail us, our Religion muſt be a vital principle inwardly to change and tranſform us. What the Apoſtle ſays concerning Circumciſion we may apply to them that are baptized and make an outward profeſſion of Chriſtianity; Baptiſm verily profiteth if we obey the Goſpel, but if we walk contrary to the precepts of it our Baptiſm is no Baptiſm, and our Chriſtianity is Heatheniſm. If by our lives and actions we do contradict that Religion which we profeſs, we do by this very thing prove our ſelves to be counterfeits and hypocrites; and that we have onely taken up our Religion for a faſhion, and received it according to cuſtom; we were born in a Countrey where it is reverenced, and therefore we are of it. And the reaſon why we are Chriſtians rather than Jews, or Turks, or Heathens, is becauſe Chriſtian Religion had the fortune to come firſt in our way and to beſpeak us at our entrance into the world.

Are we not aſhamed to take up a profeſſion upon ſuch ſlight grounds, and to wear about us ſuch an empty title? It ſhould make our blood to riſe in our faces to conſider what a diſtance there is between our Religion and our lives. I re-

member *Tully* upbraids the Philoſophers very ſmartly for living unſuitably to their Doctrines. A Philoſopher (ſaith he) is unpardonable if he miſcarry in his life, *quod in officio cujus magiſter eſſe vult labitur; artemque vitæ profeſſus, delinquit in vita; becauſe he is faulty in that wherein he pretends to be a maſter, and whilſt he profeſſeth an Art of living better than other men he miſcarries in this life.* With how much greater reaſon may we challenge Chriſtians for the miſcarriages of their lives, which are ſo directly contrary to their profeſſion? It may juſtly be ſuſpected that ſo perfect an inſtitution as the Goſpel is, which the Son of God came from Heaven on purpoſe to propagate in the world, ſhould make men more ſtrictly holy and vertuous, and ſet the profeſſors of it at a greater diſtance from all impurity and vice than ever any inſtitution in the world did. If a man profeſs any other *Art* or *Calling* it is expected that he ſhould be skill'd in it and excell thoſe who do not pretend to it. 'Tis the greateſt diſparagement to a Phyſician that can be to ſay of him, that he is in other reſpects an excellent man onely he hath no great skill in diſeaſes, and the methods of cure, becauſe this is his *Profeſſion:* He might be par-

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don'd for other defects, but the proper skill of his *Art* may juſtly be expected from him. So for a Chriſtian; to ſay of him, the worſt thing in him is his *life*; he is very orthodox in his opinions, but he's an ill-natur'd man, one of very violent paſſions, he will be very frequently drunk, he makes no conſcience of his dealings, he is very uncharitable to all that differ from him: This man is faulty in his profeſſion, he is defective in that which ſhould be his excellency; he may have orthodox opinions in Religion, but when all is done there is no ſuch errour and hereſie, nothing ſo fundamentally oppoſite to Religion as a wicked life. A Chriſtian does not pretend to have a better wit or a more piercing underſtanding than a Turk or Heathen, but he profeſſeth to live better than they, to be more chaſt and more temperate, more juſt and more charitable, more meek and gentle, more loving and peaceable than other men: If he fail in this, where is the *Art* the man boaſts of? to what purpoſe is all this noiſe and ſtir about the Goſpel and the holy doctrine of Chriſt? If any man profeſs himſelf a Chriſtian and do not live better than others he is a mere pretender and *Mountebank* in Religion,

he's a bungler in his own *Art* and unskill'd in his proper profession. This is the first, the indecency of the thing.

2. Consider how great a scandal this must needs be to our blessed Saviour and his holy Religion. The Christian Religion hath undergone many a hard censure for the miscarriages of the professors of it. The impieties and vices of those who call themselves Christians have caused many sharp reflexions upon Christianity, and made the Son of God and the Blessed Saviour of the world to wear the odious names of deceiver and impostor. If a man did design to do the greatest spight to Religion he could not give it a deeper wound, he could not take a more effectual course to disparage it than by a lewd and debauched life. For this will still be an objection in the minds of those who are strangers and enemies to our Religion. If the Gospel were so excellent an institution as it is reported to be, surely we should see better effects of it in the lives of those who profess it. When we would perswade a Heathen to our Religion, and tell him how holy a God we serve, what excellent patterns we imitate, what spiritual and divine precepts of holiness and vertue our Religion does contain; may not he

he reply, would you have me to believe you when I ſee you do not believe your ſelves? If you believed your Religion you would live according to it. For if the Goſpel were every word of it falſe, if there were neither a Heaven to be hoped for nor a Hell to be feared after this life, how could many Chriſtians live worſe than they do?

As we would not proclaim to the world that the Goſpel is an unholy and vicious Inſtitution, let us take heed that we bring no ſcandal upon it by our lives, leſt the enemies of our Religion ſay as *Salvian* tells us they did in his time, *Si Chriſtus Sancta docuiſſet Chriſtiani ſancte vixiſſent*, ſurely *if Chriſt had taught ſo holy a doctrine Chriſtians would have lived holier lives. Tully* tells us that one of the ſhrewdeſt arguments that ever was brought againſt Philoſophy was this, *quoſdam perfectos Philoſophos turpiter vivere, that ſome great Philoſophers led very filthy lives. Celſus* and *Porphyry*, *Hierocles* and *Julian*, among all their witty invectives againſt Chriſtian Religion have nothing againſt it that reflects ſo much upon it as do the wicked lives of ſo many Chriſtians. The greateſt enmity to Religion is to profeſs it and to live unanſwerably to it.

This conſideration ought greatly to affect us. I am ſure the Apoſtle ſpeaks of it with great paſſion and vehemency, *For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the Croſs of Chriſt, whoſe end is deſtruction, whoſe God is their belly, whoſe glory is in their ſhame, who mind earthly things.* A *Jew* or a *Turk* is not ſo great an enemy to Chriſtianity as a lewd and vitious Chriſtian. Therefore let me beſeech Chriſtians, as they tender the honour of their Saviour and the credit of their Religion, that they would conform their lives to the holy precepts of Chriſtianity. And if there be any who are reſolved to continue in a vitious courſe to the injury and diſparagement of Chriſtianity, I could almoſt entreat of them that they would quit their profeſſion and renounce their Baptiſm, that they would lay aſide their title of Chriſtians and initiate themſelves in Heatheniſh rites and ſuperſtitions, or be circumciſed for *Jews* or *Turks*: For it were really better, upon ſome accounts, that ſuch men ſhould abandon their Profeſſion, than keep on a vizard which ſerves to no other purpoſe but to ſcare others from Religion.

Phil. 3. 18.

3. And Laſtly, let us conſider the danger

ger we expoſe our ſelves to by not living anſwerably to our Religion. And this, I hope, may prevail upon ſuch as are not moved by the former conſiderations. Hypocrites are inſtanc'd in Scripture, as a ſort of ſinners that ſhall have the ſharpeſt torments and the fierceſt damnation. When our Saviour would ſet forth the great ſeverity of the Lord towards the evil ſervant he expreſſeth it thus, *he ſhall cut him in ſunder and appoint him his portion with Hypocrites.* So that the puniſhment of Hypocrites ſeems to be made in the meaſure and ſtandard of the higheſt puniſhment. Thou profeſſeſt to believe in Chriſt and to hope in him for ſalvation, but in the mean time thou liveſt a wicked and unholy life, thou doſt not believe but preſume on him, and wilt find at the great day that this thy confidence will be thy confuſion, and he whom thou hopeſt will be thy Advocate and Saviour will prove thy Accuſer and thy Judge. What our Saviour ſays to the Jews, *There is one that accuſeth you even Moſes in whom ye truſt* may very well be applied to falſe Chriſtians, there is one that *accuſeth* you and will condemn you, even *Jeſus in whom ye truſt.*

Mat. 24. 51.

Joh. 5. 45.

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The profeſſion of Chriſtianity and mens having the name of Chriſt named upon them will be ſo far from ſecuring them from Hell, that it will ſink them the deeper into it. Many are apt to pity the poor Heathens who never heard of the name of Chriſt, and ſadly to condole their caſe, but as our Saviour ſaid upon another occaſion, *Weep not for them, weep for your ſelves.* There's no ſuch miſerable perſon in the world as a degenerate Chriſtian, becauſe he falls into the greateſt miſery from the greateſt advantages and opportunities of being happy. Doſt thou lament the condition of *Socrates*, and *Cato*, and *Ariſtides*, and doubt what ſhall become of them at the day of Judgment? and canſt thou, who art an impious and prophane Chriſtian, think that thou ſhalt eſcape the damnation of Hell?

Doſt thou believe that the moral Heathen ſhall be caſt out? and canſt thou who haſt led a wicked life under the profeſſion of Chriſtianity have the impudence to hope that thou ſhalt ſit down with *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob* in the Kingdom of God? No, thoſe ſins which are committed by Chriſtians under the enjoyment of the Goſpel are of deeper dye and clothed with blacker aggravations

tions than the ſins of Heathens are capable of. A Pagan may live without God in the world, and be unjuſt towards men, at a cheaper rate and upon eaſier terms than thou who art a Chriſtian. Better had it been thou hadſt never known one ſyllable of the Goſpel, never heard of the name of Chriſt than that having taken it upon thee thou ſhouldſt not *depart from iniquity*. Happy had it been for thee that thou hadſt been born a Jew, or a Turk, or a poor Indian, rather than that being bred among Chriſtians and profeſſing thy ſelf of that number thou ſhouldſt lead a vitious and unholy life.

I have inſiſted the longer upon theſe arguments, that I might, if poſſible, awaken men to a ſerious conſideration of their lives, and perſwade them to a real reformation of them; that I may oblige all thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians to live up to the eſſential and fundamental Laws of our Religion; to love God, and to love our neighbour; to do to every man as we would have him to do to us, to mortifie our luſts, and ſubdue our paſſions, and ſincerely to endeavour to grow in every grace and vertue, and to abound in all the fruits of righteouſneſs

neſs which are by Jeſus Chriſt to the praiſe and glory of God.

This indeed would become our profeſſion and be honourable to our Religion, and would remove one of the greateſt obſtacles to the progreſs of the Goſpel. For how can we expect that the doctrine of God our Saviour ſhould gain any conſiderable ground in the world, ſo long as by the unworthy lives of ſo many Chriſtians 'tis repreſented to the world at ſo great diſadvantage? If ever we would have Chriſtian Religion effectually recommended, it muſt be by the holy and unblameable lives of thoſe who make profeſſion of it. Then indeed it would look with ſo amiable a countenance as to invite many to it, and carry ſo much majeſty and authority in it as to command reverence from its greateſt enemies, and make men to acknowledge that God is in us of a truth and to glorifie our Father which is in Heaven.

The good God grant that as we have taken upon us the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, ſo we may be carefull ſo to live that we may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things; that the grace of God which bringeth ſalvation

ſalvation may teach us to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent world; looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, &c.

PHIL.

PHIL. III. 20.

For our Converſation is in Heaven.

FOR the underſtanding of which words we need to look back no further than the 18*th verſe* of this *Chapter*, where the Apoſtle with great vehemency and paſſion ſpeaks of ſome among the *Philippians*, who indeed profeſs'd Chriſtianity but yet would do any thing to decline ſuffering for that profeſſion; *there are many that walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies to the Croſs of Chriſt*; they cannot endure to ſuffer with him and for him, they are ſo ſenſual and wedded to this world that they will do any thing to avoid perſecution; ſo he deſcribes them in the next *verſe whoſe end is deſtruction, whoſe God*

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is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. Now in opposition to these sensual and earthly-minded men the Apostle gives us the character of the true Christians, they are such as mind Heaven and another world, and prefer the hopes of that to all the interests of this life, *our conversation is in Heaven.*

For the right understanding of which *phrase* be pleased to observe, that it is an allusion to a City or Corporation, and to the privileges and manners of those who are free of it. And Heaven is several times in Scripture represented to us under this notion of a *City.* It is said of *Abraham* that *he looked for a City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* It is called likewise *the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.* And the same Apostle speaking of the uncertain condition of Christians in this world says of them, that *here they have no continuing City, but look for one that is to come.*

Heb. 11. 10.

Heb. 12. 22.

Heb. 14. 14.

Now to this *City* the Apostle alludes here in the Text, when he says *our conversation is in Heaven.* For the word πολίτευμα, which is rendred *conversation,* may either signifie the *privilege* of Citizens

tizens, or their *converſation* and manners, or may take in both theſe.

In the *firſt* ſenſe of the *privilege* of Citizens, we find πολιτεία a word of near affinity with this ſometimes us'd; *with a great ſum* (ſays the Captain to *Paul*) *obtained I* τὴν πολιτείαν ταύτην, *this freedom.* Act. 22. 28. According to this ſenſe, ἡμῶν τὸ πολίτευμα may very well be rendred, as *Tertullian* often does this Text, *municipatus noſter, our Citizenſhip is in Heaven*; an alluſion perhaps (as the learned Dr. *Hammond* obſerves) to thoſe who though they were not born at *Rome*, and it may be lived at a great diſtance from it, had yet *jus civitatis Romanæ*, the privilege of *Roman* Citizens. In like manner the Apoſtle here deſcribes the condition of Chriſtians. 'Tis true we are born here in this world and live in it, but we belong to another Corporation; we are denizens of another Countrey and free of that City which is above.

In the other ſenſe of the *converſation* of Citizens we find the verb πολιτεύεσθε uſed towards the beginning of this *Epiſtle*, *Let your converſation be as it becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt.* And why may not the word πολίτευμα in the Text, without any inconvenience include both theſe? as if the Phil. 1. 27.

Apoſtle had ſaid, there are ſome that mind earthly things, and are ſo addicted to them that rather than part with them they will forſake their Religion; but as for us, we conſider that we are Citizens of Heaven, and accordingly we converſe and demean our ſelves in this world as thoſe that are free of another City and do belong to it.

So that to have *our converſation in heaven* does imply theſe two things.

Firſt, The ſerious thoughts and conſiderations of Heaven.

Secondly, The effect which thoſe thoughts ought to have upon our lives.

Theſe two things take up the meaning of my Text, and ſhall be the ſubject of the following diſcourſe.

I. The ſerious thoughts and conſiderations of Heaven, that is, of the happy and glorious ſtate of good men in another life. And concerning this, there are two things principally which offer themſelves to our conſideration. *Firſt*, The happineſs of this ſtate. *Secondly*, The way and means whereby we may come to partake of this happineſs.

Firſt,

Firſt, We will conſider the happineſs of this ſtate. But what, and how great this happineſs is, I am not able to repreſent to you. Theſe things are yet in a great meaſure within the veil, and it does not now fully *appear what we ſhall be.* The Scriptures have reveal'd ſo much in general concerning the reality and unſpeakable felicities of this ſtate as may ſatisfie us for the preſent, and ſerve to enflame our deſires after it, and to quicken our endeavours for the obtaining of it; as *namely*, that it is incomparably beyond any happineſs of this world; that it is very great; and that it is eternal; in a word, that it is far above any thing that we can now conceive or imagine.

1. It is incomparably beyond any happineſs in this world. It is free from all thoſe ſharp and bitter ingredients which do abate and allay the felicities of this life. All the enjoyments of this world are mix'd, and uncertain, and unſatisfying; nay ſo far are they from giving us ſatisfaction, that the very ſweeteſt of them are ſatiating and cloying.

None of the comforts of this life are pure and unmixt. There is ſomething of *vanity* mingled with all our earthly enjoyments and *that* cauſeth *vexation of ſpirit.*

There is no ſenſual pleaſure but is either purchas'd by ſome pain, or attended with it, or ends in it. A great eſtate is neither to be got without care, nor kept without fear, nor loſt without trouble. Dignity and greatneſs is troubleſome almoſt to all mankind, it is commonly uneaſie to them that have it and it is uſually hated and envy'd by thoſe that have it not. Knowledge, that is one of the beſt and ſweeteſt pleaſures of humane life; and yet if we may believe the experience of one, who had as great a ſhare of it as any of the Sons of men ever had, he will tell us, that *this alſo is vexation of ſpirit; for in much wiſdom there is much grief, and he that encreaſeth knowledge, encreaſeth ſorrow.*

Eccleſ. 1. 17, 18.

Thus it is with all the things of this world; the beſt of them have a mixture of good and evil, of joy and ſorrow in them: but the happineſs of the next life is free from allay and mixture. In the deſcription of the *new Jeruſalem* it is ſaid, that *there ſhall be no more curſe, and there ſhall be no night there*, nothing to imbitter our bleſſings, or obſcure our glory. Heaven is the proper region of happineſs, there onely are pure joys and an unmingled felicity.

Rev. 22. 3, 5.

But the enjoyments of this world as they

they are mix'd, ſo they are uncertain. So wavering and inconſtant are they that we can have no ſecurity of them, when we think our ſelves to have the faſteſt hold of them they ſlip out of our hands we know not how. For this reaſon *Solomon* very elegantly calls them things *that are not*, *Why wilt thou ſet thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make to themſelves wings and flie like an Eagle towards heaven.* So fugitive are they, that after all our endeavours to ſecure them they may break looſe from us and in an inſtant vaniſh out of our ſight, *riches make to themſelves wings, and flie like an Eagle*, intimating to us that riches are often acceſſary to their own ruin. Many times the greatneſs of a man's eſtate, and nothing elſe, hath been the cauſe of the loſs of it, and of taking away the life of the owner thereof. The *fairneſs* of ſome mens fortune hath been a temptation to thoſe who have been more powerfull to *raviſh* it from them, thus *riches make to themſelves wings.* So that he that enjoys the greateſt happineſs of this world does ſtill want one happineſs more, to ſecure to him for the future what he poſſeſſes for the preſent. But the happineſs of Heaven is a ſteady and conſtant light, fixt and unchangeable

as the fountain from whence it ſprings, *the father of lights, with whom is no variableneſs nor ſhadow of turning.*

And if the enjoyments of this life were certain, yet they are unſatisfying. This is the *vanity of vanities*, that every thing in this world can trouble us but nothing can give us ſatisfaction. I know not how it is, but either we, or the things of this world, or both, are ſo phantaſtical, that we can neither be well with theſe things, nor well without them. If we be hungry, we are in pain; and if we eat to the full, we are uneaſie. If we be poor we think our ſelves miſerable, and when we come to be rich we commonly really are ſo. If we are in a low condition we fret and murmur, and if we chance to get up and to be rais'd to greatneſs we are many times farther from contentment than we were before. So that we purſue the happineſs of this world juſt as little children chaſe birds, when we think we are come very near it and have it almoſt in our hands it flies farther from us than it was at firſt.

Nay, ſo far are the enjoyments of this world from affording us ſatisfaction, that the ſweeteſt of them are moſt apt to ſatiate and cloy us. All the pleaſures of this

world

world are ſo contriv'd as to yield us very little happineſs. If they go off quickly they ſignifie nothing, and if they ſtay long we are ſick of them. After a full draught of any ſenſual pleaſure we preſently loath it, and hate it as much after the enjoyment as we courted it and long'd for it in the expectation. But the delights of the other world, as they will give us full ſatisfaction ſo we ſhall never be weary of them. Every repetition of them will be accompanied with a new pleaſure and contentment. In the felicities of Heaven theſe two things ſhall be reconcil'd, which never met together in any ſenſual delight, long and full enjoyment and yet a freſh and perpetual pleaſure. As in God's *preſence there is fulneſs of joy*, ſo *at his right hand there ſhall be pleaſures for evermore.*

2. The happineſs of the other life is not onely incomparably beyond any happineſs of this world (that, it it may be, is no great commendation of it) but it is very great in it ſelf. The happineſs of Heaven is uſually in Scripture deſcrib'd to us by ſuch pleaſures as are manly and excellent, chaſt and intellectual, infinitely more pure and refin'd than thoſe of ſenſe; and if the Scripture at any time deſcend to the metaphors of a *feaſt*, and a *banquet*, and a

marriage, it is plainly by way of accommodation to our weakneſs and condeſcention to our capacities.

But the chief ingredients of this happineſs, ſo far as the Scripture hath thought fit to reveal it to us, are the perfection of our knowledge, and the height of our love, and the perpetual ſociety and friendſhip of all the bleſſed inhabitants of thoſe glorious manſions; and the joyfull concurrence of all theſe in chearfull expreſſions of gratitude, in the inceſſant praiſes and admiration of the fountain and author of all this happineſs. And what can be more delightfull than to have our underſtandings entertain'd with a clear ſight of the beſt and moſt perfect Being, with the knowledge of all his works and of the wiſe deſigns of his providence here in the world? than to live in the reviving preſence of God, and to be continually attending upon him whoſe favour is life, and whoſe glory is much more above that of any of the Princes of this world than the greateſt of them is above the pooreſt worm? The Queen of *Sheba* thought *Solomon*'s Servants happy in having the opportunity by ſtanding continually before him to hear his wiſdom; but in the other world it ſhall be a happineſs to *Solomon*

Iomon himſelf, and to the wiſeſt and greateſt perſons that ever were in this world, to ſtand before this great King to admire his wiſdom and to behold his glory. Not that I imagine the happineſs of Heaven to conſiſt in a perpetual gazing upon God, and in an idle contemplation of the glories of that place. For as by that bleſſed ſight we ſhall be infinitely tranſported, ſo the Scripture tells us we ſhall be alſo tranſform'd into the image of the divine perfections; we *ſhall ſee God. and we ſhall be like him*, and what greater happineſs can there be than to be like the happieſt and moſt perfect Being in the world? Beſides, who can tell what employment God may have for us in the next life? We need not doubt but that he who is happineſs it ſelf, and hath promis'd to make us happy, can eaſily find out ſuch employments and delights for us in the other world as will be proper and ſuitable to that ſtate.

But then beſides the improvement of our knowledge there ſhall be the moſt delightfull exerciſe of love. When we come to heaven we ſhall enter into the ſociety of the bleſſed Angels and of *the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*, that is, freed from all thoſe paſſions and infirmities which do now render the converſation, even of the

the beſt men, ſometimes troubleſom to one another. We ſhall then meet with all thoſe excellent Perſons, thoſe brave Minds, thoſe innocent and charitable Souls whom we have ſeen, and heard, and read of in this world. There we ſhall meet with many of our dear relations and intimate friends, and perhaps with many of our enemies, to whom we ſhall then be perfectly reconcil'd notwithſtanding all the warm conteſts and peeviſh differences which we had with them in this world, even about matters of Religion. For Heaven is a ſtate of perfect love and friendſhip, there will be nothing but kindneſs and good nature there, and all the prudent Arts of endearment and wiſe ways of rendring converſation mutually pleaſant to one another. And what greater happineſs can be imagin'd than to converſe freely with ſo many excellent perſons, without any thing of folly or diſguiſe, of jealouſie or deſign upon one another? For then there will be none of thoſe vices and paſſions, of covetouſneſs and ambition, of envy and hatred, of wrath and peeviſhneſs, which do now ſo much ſpoil the pleaſure and diſturb the quiet of mankind. All quarrels and contentions, ſchiſms and diviſions will then be effectually hinder'd

der'd, not by force but by love, not by compulſion but by that *charity which never fails*; and all thoſe controverſies in Religion which are now ſo hotly agitated will then be finally determin'd, not as we endeavour to end them now by Canons and Decrees, but by a perfect knowledge and convincing light.

And when this bleſſed ſociety is met together and thus united by love, they ſhall all joyn in gratitude to their great Patrons and Benefactors, *to Him that ſits upon the Throne and to the Lamb that was ſlain, to God even our Father, and to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath lov'd us and waſh'd us from our ſins in his own blood.* And they ſhall ſing everlaſting ſongs of praiſe to God for all his works of wonder, for the effects of that infinite goodneſs, and admirable wiſdom, and almighty power, which are clearly ſeen in the creation and government of the world and of all the Creatures in it; particularly for his favours to mankind, for the benefit of their beings, for the comfort of their lives, and for all his mercifull providences towards them in this world: But above all for the redemption of their ſouls by the death of his Son for the free forgiveneſs of their ſins, for the gracious aſſiſtance of his holy

holy Spirit, and for conducting them ſafely through all the ſnares and dangers, the troubles and temptations of this world to the ſecure poſſeſſion of that glory and happineſs which then they ſhall be partakers of, and are bound to praiſe God for to all eternity. This, this ſhall be the employment of the bleſſed ſpirits above, and theſe are the chief ingredients of our happineſs which the Scripture mentions. And if there were no other as there may be ten thouſand more for any thing I can tell, yet generous and vertuous minds will eaſily underſtand how great a pleaſure there is in the improvement of our knowledge, and the exerciſe of love, and in a gratefull and perpetual acknowledgement of the greateſt benefits that creatures are capable of receiving.

3. This happineſs ſhall be eternal. And though this be but a circumſtance and do not enter into the nature of our happineſs, yet it is ſo material a one that all the felicities which heaven affords would be imperfect without it. It would ſtrangely damp and allay all our joys to think that they ſhould ſometime have an end. And the greater our happineſs were, the greater trouble it would be to us to conſider that it muſt have a period. It would make a

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man ſorrowfull indeed to think of leaving ſuch vaſt poſſeſſions. Indeed if the happineſs of heaven were ſuch as the joys of this world are, it were fit they ſhould be as ſhort; for after a little enjoyment it would cloy us, and we ſhould ſoon grow weary of it: But being ſo excellent, it would ſcarce be a happineſs if it were not eternal. It would imbitter the pleaſures of heaven, as great as they are, to ſee to an end of them, though it were at never ſo great a diſtance; to conſider that all this vaſt treaſure of happineſs would one day be exhauſted, and that after ſo many years were paſt we ſhould be as poor and miſerable again as we were once in this world. God hath ſo order'd things, that the vain and empty delights of this world ſhould be temporary and tranſient, but that the great and ſubſtantial pleaſures of the other world ſhould be as laſting as they are excellent. For Heaven as it is an *exceeding*, ſo it is *an eternal weight of glory*. And this is that which crowns the joys of heaven and baniſhes all fear and trouble from the minds of the bleſſed. And thus to be ſecur'd in the poſſeſſion of our happineſs is an unſpeakable addition to it. For that which is eternal as it ſhall never determine, ſo it can never be

be diminiſh'd; for to be diminiſh'd and to decay is to draw nearer to an end, but that which ſhall never have an end can never come nearer to it.

O vaſt *eternity!* how doſt thou ſwallow up our thoughts and entertain us at once with delight and amazement? This is the very top and higheſt pitch of our happineſs, upon which we may ſtand ſecure and look down with ſcorn upon all things here below; and how ſmall and inconſiderable do they appear to us, compar'd with the vaſt and endleſs enjoyments of our future ſtate? But oh vain and fooliſh ſouls! that are ſo little concern'd for eternity; that for the trifles of time, and *the pleaſures of ſin which are but for a ſeaſon*, can find in our hearts to forfeit an everlaſting felicity. Bleſſed God! why haſt thou prepar'd ſuch a happineſs for thoſe who neither conſider it, nor [illegible] after it? *Why is ſuch a price put into the hands of fools, who have no heart to make uſe of it*; who fondly chuſe to gratifie their luſts rather than to ſave their ſouls, and ſottiſhly prefer the temporary enjoyments of ſin before a bleſſed immortality?

4. And laſtly, This happineſs is far above any thing that we can now conceive or

or imagine. It is ſo great that it cannot now *enter into the heart of man.* We cannot from the experience of any of thoſe pleaſures and delights which we have been acquainted withall in this world frame an equal *Idea* and conception of it. So that when we come to Heaven we ſhall be ready to ſay of it as the Queen of *Sheba* did of *Solomon*'s wiſedom and proſperity, that *half of it hath not been told us*; that the felicities and glories of that ſtate do far exceed all the fame which we heard of them in this world. For who can ſay how great a good God is? and how happy he who is the fountain of happineſs can make thoſe ſouls that love him, and thoſe whom he loves?

In this imperfect ſtate we are not capable of a full repreſentation of thoſe glories. *We cannot* now *ſee God and live.* A full deſcription of Heaven and of the pleaſures of that ſtate would let in joys upon us too big for our narrow capacities, and too ſtrong for weak mortality to bear. *We are now but Children, and we ſpeak as Children, and underſtand* and think *as Children* concerning theſe things; but in the other ſtate we ſhall grow up *to be men*, and then we ſhall *put away* theſe *childiſh* thoughts; *now we know but in part, but*

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1 Cor. 13. 9, 10, 11. *when that which is perfect is come, that which is imperfect ſhall be done away; now we ſee through a glaſs darkly (ἐν αἰνίγματι, in a riddle) but then we ſhall ſee face to face; now we know in part, but then we ſhall know even as alſo we are known*, as the Apoſtle diſcourſeth excellently concerning this very matter.

No ſooner ſhall we enter upon the joys of the other world, but our minds ſhall be rais'd to a ſtrength and activity as much above that of the moſt knowing perſons in this world as the thoughts of the greateſt Philoſopher and wiſeſt man upon earth are above the thoughts of a child or a fool. No man's mind is now ſo well fram'd to underſtand any thing in this world, as our underſtandings ſhall then be fitted for the knowledge of God and of the things that belong to that ſtate. In the mean time let us bleſs God that he hath reveal'd ſo much of this happineſs to us as is neceſſary to excite and encourage us to ſeek after it.

The *Second* thing to be conſider'd concerning our future happineſs, is the way and means whereby we may come to be made partakers of it. And that in ſhort is by the conſtant and ſincere endeavours of a holy life, in and through the mercies of

of God in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Chriſt indeed is the author of our ſalvation, but obedience is the condition of it; ſo the Apoſtle tells us, that Chriſt *is the author of eternal ſalvation to them that obey him.* Heb. 5. 1. It is *the grace of God* in the Goſpel *which brings* or offers this *ſalvation* to us, but then it is by the *denying of ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*, and by *living ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world* that we are *to wait for the bleſſed hope.* Tit. 2. 11, 12. Our Saviour promiſes this happineſs to the pure in heart, *Bleſſed are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God*; and elſewhere the Scripture doth exclude all others from any ſhare or portion in this bleſſedneſs, ſo the Apoſtle aſſures us *that without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord.* Heb. 18. 14.

And holineſs is not onely a condition but a neceſſary qualification for the happineſs of the next life. This is the force of St. *John*'s reaſoning, *we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him.* To *ſee God* is to be happy, but unleſs we be like him we cannot ſee him. The ſight and preſence of God himſelf would be no happineſs to that man who is not like to God in the temper and diſpoſition of his mind. And from hence the Apoſtle infers in the next *verſe, every man that hath this hope in him*

purifieth himself even as he is pure. So that if we live wicked lives, if we allow our selves in the practice of any known sin, we interrupt our hopes of Heaven and render our selves unfit for eternal life. By this means we defeat all the designs of God's grace and mercy towards us, and salvation it self cannot save us if we make our selves incapable of that happiness which God offers. Heaven is in Scripture call'd *an inheritance among them that are sanctified*, and *the inheritance of the Saints in light*; so that it is not enough that this *inheritance* is promis'd to us, but we must be qualifi'd and prepar'd for it, and *be made meet to be made partakers of it.*

And this life is the time of our preparation for our future state. Our souls will continue for ever what we make them in this world. Such a temper and disposition of mind as a man carries with him out of this life he shall retain in the next. 'Tis true indeed, heaven perfects those holy and vertuous dispositions which are begun here; but the other world alters no man as to his main state, *he that is filthy will be filthy still*, and *he that is unrighteous will be unrighteous* still. If we do not in a good degree mortifie our lusts and passions here

death

death will not kill them for us, but we ſhall carry them with us into the other world. And if God ſhould admit us ſo qualifi'd into the place of happineſs, yet we ſhall bring that along with us which would infallibly hinder us from being happy. Our ſenſual inclinations and deſires would meet with nothing there that would be ſuitable to them, and we ſhould be perpetually tormented with thoſe appetites which we brought with us out of this world, becauſe we ſhould find nothing there to gratifie them withall. For as the Apoſtle ſays in another ſenſe, *The kingdom of God is not meats and drinks, but righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt.* The happineſs of heaven conſiſts in ſuch things as a wicked man hath no guſt and reliſh for. So that if a covetous, or ambitious, or voluptuous man were in Heaven, he would be juſt like the rich man in Hell, tormented with a continual thirſt, and burnt up in the flames of his own ardent deſires; and would not be able, amidſt all the plenty and treaſures of that place, to find ſo much as one drop of ſuitable pleaſure and delight to quench and allay that heat. So likewiſe our fierce and unruly paſſions; if we ſhould carry them with us into the other world, how inconſiſtent would they be

with happineſs? They would not onely make us miſerable our ſelves, but be a trouble to all thoſe with whom we ſhould converſe. If a man of an envious and malicious, of a peeviſh and paſſionate temper, were admitted into the manſions of the bleſſed, he would not onely be unhappy himſelf, but would diſturb the quiet of others, and raiſe ſtorms even in thoſe calm regions. Vain man! that dreameſt of being happy without any diſpoſition or preparation for it. To be happy, is to enjoy what we deſire and to live with thoſe whom we love. But there is nothing in heaven ſuitable to the deſires and appetites of a wicked man. All the joys of that place, and the delights of that ſtate are purely ſpiritual, and are onely to be reliſh'd by thoſe who have *purified themſelves as God is pure.* But if thou be carnal and ſenſual, what are theſe things to thee? What happineſs would it be to thee to ſee God, and to have him always in thy view who was never in all thy thoughts; to be tied to live for ever in his company who is of a quite contrary temper and diſpoſition to thy ſelf, whoſe preſence thou dreadeſt, and whom whilſt thou waſt in this world thou couldſt never endure to think upon? So that the pleaſures

of

of Heaven it ſelf could ſignifie no good or happineſs to that man who is not ſo diſpos'd as to take pleaſure in them. Heaven is too pure an air for corrupt ſouls to live and breath in, and the whole employment and converſation of that place, as it would be unſuitable, ſo would it alſo be unacceptable to a ſenſual and vicious perſon.

From all this it appears how neceſſary it is for us to prepare our ſelves for this bleſſed ſtate, by the conſtant and ſincere endeavours of a holy life, and by mortifying every luſt and inordinate paſſion in our ſouls. For till this be done we are not meet to be made partakers of the felicities of the other world. And thus I have done with the *firſt* thing imply'd in this phraſe *of having our converſation in heaven, viz.* the ſerious thoughts and conſiderations of heaven; or the happineſs of that ſtate, and of the way and means whereby that happineſs is to be attained.

II. The *having our converſation in heaven* does imply likewiſe the effect which thoſe conſiderations ought to have upon our hearts and lives: As

1. To convince us of the vanity of this world. God hath on purpoſe made this

world troubleſome and uneaſie to us, that there might be no ſufficient temptation to reaſonable and conſiderate men to take them off from the care and thought of their future happineſs; that God and heaven might have no rival here below; that there might be nothing in this world that might pretend to our affection or court us with any advantage in compariſon of everlaſting life and glory.

When we come to die and eternity ſhall preſent it ſelf to our ſerious and waking thoughts, then things will put on another face, and thoſe things which we valued ſo much in this life will then appear to be nothing worth; but thoſe things which we neglected, to be of infinite concernment to us, and worthy to have been the care and endeavour of our whole lives. And if we would conſider theſe things in time, while the opportunities of life and health are before us, we might be convinc'd at a cheaper rate, and come to be ſatisfi'd of the vanity of this world before we deſpair'd of the happineſs of the other.

2. To make us very active and induſtrious to be as good, and to do as much good as we can in this life, that ſo we may be qualifi'd and diſpos'd for the happineſs of the

the next. Men are uſually very induſtrious for the things of this life, to be rich and great in the world; did we but value heaven half as much as it deſerves we ſhould take infinitely more pains for that. So often as we conſider the glories that are above, how does it accuſe our ſloth and condemn our folly that we are leſs concerned for our ſouls than moſt men are for their bodies, that we will not labour half ſo much for an eternal inheritance as men ordinarily do for theſe corruptible things?

Let us remember that we are haſting apace to another world, and that our eternal happineſs now lies at the ſtake. And how ſhould it quicken our endeavours to have ſuch a reward ſet before us, to have Crowns and Sceptres in our eyes? would we but often repreſent to our minds the glorious things of another world, what fervours ſhould we feel in our hearts? we ſhould be all life, and ſpirit, and wing; and ſhould do God's will, almoſt with the ſame readineſs and delight, as the *Angels* do *who continually behold the face of their Father.* The conſideration of heaven and the firm perſwaſion of our future happineſs ſhould actuate all the powers of our ſouls, and be continually inſpiring us with new vigour

in the ways of holineſs and vertue. How ſhould this thought ſwell our reſolutions and confirm our purpoſes of obedience, that if we have our *fruit unto holineſs* our *end will be everlaſting life.*

3. To mitigate and lighten the evils and afflictions of this life. It is no great matter how rough the way be provided we be ſure that it leads to happineſs. The incomparably greater good of the next life will to a wiſe and conſiderate man weigh down all the evils of this. And the Scripture tells us that there is no compariſon between them. *The ſufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which ſhall be revealed in us.* The evils of this life afflict men more or leſs according as the ſoul is fortified with conſiderations proper to ſupport us under them. When we conſider that we have but a little while to be here, that we are upon our journey travelling towards our heavenly Countrey where we ſhall meet with all the delights we can deſire, it ought not to trouble us much to endure ſtorms and foul ways, and to want many of thoſe accommodations we might expect at home. This is the common fate of Travellers, and we muſt take things as we find them and not look to have every thing juſt

Rom. 8. 18.

to

to our mind. Theſe difficulties and inconveniences will ſhortly be over, and after a few days will be quite forgotten, and be to us as if they had never been. And when we are ſafely landed in our own Country, with what pleaſure ſhall we look back upon thoſe rough and boiſterous Seas which we have eſcap'd? The more troubles we have paſt through the kinder uſage we ſhall find when we come to our Father's houſe. So the Apoſtle tells us, that *our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* When we come to heaven our happineſs ſhall then be as real as our miſeries were here upon earth, and far greater and more laſting. And what great matter is it though we ſuffer a while in this world, provided we eſcape the endleſs unſufferable torments of the next; though we have not our good things in this life, if infinitely greater be reſerv'd for us and we ſhall receive them with intereſt in the other?

Several of the evils and calamities of this life would be inſufferable indeed, if there were nothing better to be hoped for hereafter. If this were true, Chriſtians would not onely be of all *men* but of all *creatures the moſt miſerable.* But our Religion

gion hath abundantly assur'd us to the contrary. And the assurance of this was that which made the primitive Christians to embrace sufferings with so much cheerfulness, *to glory in tribulation*, and *to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better and more enduring substance.* The seven brethren in the History of the *Maccabees* upon this perswasion would *not accept deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection.* That storm of stones which was pour'd upon St. *Stephen* was no more to him than a common shower when *he saw the heavens open'd*, and *Jesus* (in whose cause he suffer'd) *standing on the right hand of God.*

4. To make us sincere in all our professions, words and actions, did men firmly believe the rewards of another world their Religion would not be onely in shew and pretence, but in life and reality, no man would put on a *form of godliness* that were destitute of *the power of it*; we should do nothing for the opinion of others, but all with regard to God and our own Consciences; and be as curious of our thoughts, and most retir'd actions, as if we were in an open theatre and in the presence of the greatest assembly. For in the next life men

men ſhall not be rewarded for what they ſeem'd to be, but for what they really were in this world. Therefore whatever we think, or ſpeak, or do, we ſhould always remember that the day of revelation is coming, when the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be diſclos'd, when all diſguiſes ſhall be laid aſide, and every ones mask ſhall be taken off, and all our actions and deſigns ſhall be brought upon the publick ſtage and expos'd to the view of men and Angels. *There is nothing* now *hidden which ſhall not* then *be reveal'd, nor ſecret which ſhall not be made known.*

5. To arm us againſt the fears of death. Death is terrible to nature, and the terrour of it is infinitely encreas'd by the fearfull apprehenſions of what may follow it. But the comfortable hopes of a bleſſed immortality do ſtrangely relieve the fainting ſpirits of dying men, and are able to reconcile us to death, and in a great meaſure to take away the terrour of it. I know that the thoughts of death are diſmal even to good men, and we have never more need of comfort and encouragement than when we are conflicting with this laſt Enemy, and there is no ſuch comfortable conſideration to a dying man as the hopes of a happy eternity. He that looks

looks upon death onely as a paſſage to glory, may welcome the meſſengers of it as bringing him the beſt and moſt joyfull news that ever came to him in his whole life, and no man can ſtay behind in this world with half the comfort that this man leaves it.

And now I have done with the *two* things implyed in this phraſe, of *having our converſation in heaven*, *viz.* the ſerious thoughts and conſiderations of heaven, and the effect of theſe thoughts and conſiderations upon our hearts and lives.

I crave your patience but a little longer, till I make ſome reflexion upon what hath been deliver'd concerning the happineſs of good men after this life. I have told you that it is incomparably beyond any happineſs of this world, that it is great in it ſelf, and eternal in its duration, and far above any thing that we can now conceive or imagine. And now after all this, I am very ſenſible how much all that I have ſaid comes ſhort of the greatneſs and dignity of the thing. So that I could almoſt begin again and make a new attempt upon this ſubject. And indeed who would not be loth to be taken off from ſo delightfull an argument? Methinks 'tis good for us to be here, and to let our minds dwell upon theſe

theſe conſiderations. We are unworthy of heaven and unfit to partake of ſo great a glory, if we cannot take pleaſure in the contemplation of thoſe things now the poſſeſſion whereof ſhall be our happineſs for ever.

With what joy then ſhould we think of thoſe *great and glorious things which God hath prepar'd for them that love him, of that inheritance incorruptible, undefil'd, which fadeth not away, reſerv'd for us in the heavens?* How ſhould we welcome the thoughts of that happy hour when we ſhall make our eſcape out of theſe priſons, when we ſhall paſs out *of this howling wilderneſs* into *the promis'd Land*, when we ſhall be remov'd from all the troubles and temptations of a wicked and ill-natur'd world; when we ſhall be paſt all ſtorms, and ſecur'd from all further danger of ſhipwreck, and ſhall be ſafely landed in the regions of bliſs and immortality?

O bleſſed time! *When all tears ſhall be wip'd from our eyes*, and *death and ſorrow ſhall be no more*; When *mortality* ſhall *be ſwallow'd up of life*, and we ſhall enter upon the poſſeſſion of all that happineſs and glory which God hath promis'd, and our faith hath believ'd, and our hopes have rais'd

rais'd us to the expectation of; when we ſhall be eas'd of all our pains, and reſolv'd of all our doubts, and be purg'd from all our ſins and be free'd from all our fears, and be happy beyond all our hopes, and have all this happineſs ſecur'd to us beyond the power of time and change: When we ſhall know God and other things without ſtudy, and love him and one another without meaſure, and ſerve and praiſe him without wearineſs, and obey his will without the leaſt reluctancy; and ſhall ſtill be more and more delighted in the knowing, and loving, and praiſing, and obeying of God to all eternity.

How ſhould theſe thoughts affect our hearts, and what a mighty influence ought they to have upon our lives? The great diſadvantage of the arguments fetch'd from another world is this, that thoſe things are at a great diſtance from us, and not ſenſible to us; and therefore are not apt to affect us ſo ſtrongly, and to work ſo powerfully upon us. Now to make amends for this diſadvantage we ſhould often revive theſe conſiderations upon our minds, and inculcate upon our ſelves the reality and certainty of theſe things together with the infinite weight and importance of them. We ſhould reaſon thus with

with our ſelves; If good men ſhall be ſo unſpeakably happy, and conſequently wicked men ſo extreamly miſerable in another world: If theſe things be true and will one day be found to be ſo, why ſhould they not be to me as if they were already preſent? why ſhould not I be as much afraid to commit any ſin as if hell were naked before me, and I ſaw the aſtoniſhing miſeries of the damned? and why ſhould I not be as carefull to ſerve God and keep his commandments, as if heaven were open to my view, and I ſaw *Jeſus* ſtanding at the right hand of God with crowns of glory in his hand ready to be ſet upon the heads of all thoſe who continue faithfull to him?

The lively apprehenſions of the nearneſs of death and eternity are apt to make mens thoughts more quick and piercing, and according as we think our ſelves prepar'd for our future ſtate to tranſport us with joy, or to amaze us with horrour. For the ſoul that is fully ſatisfi'd of his future bliſs is already entred into heaven, has begun to take poſſeſſion of glory, and has (as it were) his bleſſed Saviour in his arms, and may ſay with old *Simeon*, *Lord now letteſt thou thy ſervant depart in peace, for mine eyes have ſeen thy ſalvation.* But the

the thoughts of death muſt needs be very terrible to that man who is doubtfull or deſpairing of his future condition. It would daunt the ſtouteſt man that ever breathed, to look upon death when he can ſee nothing but hell beyond it. When the Apparition at *Endor* told *Saul*, *to morrow thou and thy Sons ſhall be with me*, theſe words ſtruck him to the heart, ſo that *he fell down to the ground, and there was no more ſtrength left in him.* It is as certain that we ſhall die as if an expreſs meſſenger ſhould come to every one of us from the other world and tell us ſo. Why ſhould we not then always live as thoſe that muſt die, and as thoſe that hope to be happy after death? To have theſe apprehenſions vigorous and lively upon our minds this is *to have our converſation in heaven, from whence alſo we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall change our vile body that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power whereby he is able even to ſubdue all things to himſelf.*

FINIS.